



IRON CHARIOTS

the counter-apologetics wiki

"And the LORD was with Judah; and he drove
not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, beca

— Judges 1:19

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Arguments against the existence of god

Arguments against the existence of God

Overview

God claims

There are an infinite possible number of interpretations of the idea of "god" and even of religion. Over a thousand different denominations of Christianity alone, all with their different beliefs on who or what god is. Surely it would be impossible to rule out all of them. However if we zero in and examine a theistic claim about a specific god's nature or character, we can draw certain conclusions based on what we've learned about the world through the systematic observations and testing of reality known as science. Despite the theistic assertions that god cannot be caged by science, these specific claims made by the theist can be assessed. As our understanding of the world has increased through science, the *gaps* that god is able to inhabit have gotten smaller and smaller. With every additional piece of information we learn about the world, the more the constraints tighten on what a god could have or can do. This is perhaps best stated in [Stephen Hawking's](#) *a brief history of time*.

Stephen Hawking in A brief history of time c. 1988

"One can imagine that God created the universe at literally any time in the past. On the other hand, if the universe is expanding, there may be physical reasons why there had to be a beginning. One could still imagine that God created the universe at the instant of the big bang, or even afterward in just such a way as to make it look as though there had been a big bang, but it would be meaningless to suppose that it was created before the big bang. An expanding universe does not preclude a creator, but it does place limits on when he might have carried out his job!"

With our current understanding of our place in the world through biology and astrophysics, we are able to make assessments about certain aspects or claims of god. We have mountains of empirical evidence that life is a result of evolution, not specific intentional creation by an omnipotent being as depicted in Genesis. We have mathematical evidence that Noah's ark could not have stayed afloat during a rainstorm of such capacity that earth's highest peaks were submerged. We have historical evidence that the Israelites were never enslaved by the Egyptians as depicted in Exodus. As it currently stands, our understanding of the universe

places the necessity and likelihood of a god or gods to be on about the same footing as that of the tooth fairy.

Even if there are several arguments for the existence of god, we have to understand that these do not entail a belief beyond what is argued for. For example, the Cosmological Argument may postulate the need for a cause, which can be called "god." However we must not assume that it is in any way an argument for the Christian god, a god who answers prayers and counts the number of hair on ones head. In fact most of their arguments only strengthen the Deistic view. Christian and Muslim apologists are good defenders of Deism but cannot aptly justify the specifics of their beliefs.

Many argue not for the existence of the entity known as "God," but rather for the "God-Shaped Hole" humans are said to possess. The God-Shaped Hole or "God part of the Brain" is a non-clinical Psychological term used to define a cluster of neurons that develop supernatural or otherworldly experiences, suggesting ultimately that humans are mistakenly wired into a belief in God.

Any argument from the side of the Christians must be first verified by themselves in a [Call for Proof](#). The Bible itself has many determining statements by which we can see that evidence and signs are essential to belief. How can one lay a claim to faith with out the slightest shard of evidence.

See also

- [Call for Proof](#)
- [Arguments for the existence of God](#)
- [Arguments against religious belief](#), which do not try to directly disprove the existence of God.

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Argument from nonbelief



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[*Argument from nonbelief*](#)



For more information, see the Atheist Debates video on [Divine Hiddenness](#).

The **argument from nonbelief**, **argument from reasonable nonbelief**, and **argument from divine hiddenness** are a related set of [arguments against the existence of God](#). They have the following rough form:

1. If God existed, this fact would be more obvious.
2. God's existence is not, in fact, as obvious as we would expect, if he existed.
3. Therefore, God does not exist.

"If God wants us to do a thing he should make his wishes sufficiently clear. Sensible people will wait till he has done this before paying much attention to him."

— Samuel Butler

"God will reveal Himself to a heart that is sincerely seeking Him."^[1]

"If the Damascus road experience was good enough for Saul, then it should be good enough for all of us, otherwise you have a God that is playing favorites."^[2]

The argument from non-belief is arguably much stronger than the [problem of evil](#) because it deals with concepts, such as relationships, that are well within the understanding of humans.^[2]

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Other examples

[...] if there is a god, that god should know exactly what it would take to change my mind...and that god should be capable of doing whatever it would take. The fact that this hasn't happened can only mean one of two things:

- 1. No such god exists.*
- 2. Whatever god exists doesn't care to convince me, at this time.*

In either case, it's not my problem and there's nothing I can do about it. Meanwhile, all of those believers who think that there is a god who does want me to know that he exists - are clearly, obviously, undeniably... wrong.^[3]

Arguments for the first premise

Argument for God's love

[J. L. Schellenberg](#), the original proponent of the argument, has argued that a loving God would want to have a relationship with every person on Earth, which requires that his existence be made evident to everyone.

When it comes to the use of divine hiddenness as an objection or evidence against God, Daniel Howard-Snyder and Paul Moser in the introduction to a volume of papers dedicated to refutations of Schellenberg's argument, cite Nietzsche's question: "a god who is all-knowing and all-powerful and who does not even make sure his creatures understand his intentions — could that be a god of goodness?"

Arguments from religious doctrine

[Theodore Drange](#), who defended the argument in his 1998 book, *[Nonbelief and Evil: Two Arguments for the Nonexistence of God](#)*, explicitly focused most of his book on the god of [evangelical Christianity](#). He approvingly quoted David and Randall Basinger, who said, "[T]he philosophical community would be better served

if it concerned itself primarily with... *specific* theological systems." (emphasis added)^[4]

A number of [Biblical](#) passages suggest God strongly desires everyone to be aware of his existence:

- A number verses, including [John 3:16](#) 📖 and [Romans 10:9](#) 📖, suggest belief is required for salvation.
- [1 Timothy 2:4](#) 📖 says God "wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

Drange also cites a number of divine commands which suggest God wants everyone to believe:

"(a) God commanded people to 'believe on the name of his son Jesus Christ' ([1 John 3:23](#) 📖). (b) God commanded people to love him maximally ([Matt. 22:37](#) 📖, [Mark 12:30](#) 📖), and called that his 'greatest commandment.' (c) Jesus directed missionaries to preach the gospel message to all nations ([Matt. 28:19-20](#) 📖) and to all creation ([Mark 16:15-16](#) 📖 NIV)."^[8]

In spite of his emphasis on [evangelicalism](#), Drange has explained that he views his argument as a problem for anyone who would answer "yes" to two questions:

1. Could God have done things that would have caused everyone, or almost everyone, to believe that he exists?
2. Does God strongly desire that everyone, or almost everyone, believe that he exists?

Other supporting verses include:

- Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened [Matthew 7:7-8](#) 📖.^[5]

Syllogism

Though Shellenberg refers to his argument as dealing with "divine hiddenness," he has specifically formulated it in terms of reasonable or inculpable non-belief:

1. If God existed, there would be no instances of reasonable or inculpable non-belief.
2. But there are instances of reasonable or inculpable non-belief.
3. Therefore, God does not exist.

Theodore Drange, in contrast, has argued the argument should be formulated simply in terms of non-belief. First, he argues that the distinction between non-belief and *reasonable* non-belief is unclear. Also, he argues that even if it could be made clear, it would be irrelevant:

"A perfectly loving deity would set vindictiveness aside and still want to help nonbelievers (by supplying them with evidence of his existence), despite their culpability."

Drange's argument from non-belief

1. God is omniscient.
2. God is omnipotent.
3. God wants everyone to believe in him.
4. Since God is omniscient, he knows exactly what demonstration would convince any given person that he exists.
5. Since God is omnipotent, he is capable of performing this demonstration.
6. Since God wants everyone to believe in him, he wants to perform this demonstration.
7. However, atheists manifestly exist.
8. Therefore, the god described by the first three conditions does not exist.

9. Objections

10. Many counter arguments deny the premise that God wants a relationship or belief from all humans ([That's not my God](#)), often because some other goal has a higher priority.

11. Free will

12. Probably the most popular objection to the argument from non-belief is that if God caused everyone to believe, he would be interfering with their [free will](#).
13. *"God maintains a delicate balance between keeping his existence sufficiently evident so people will know He's there and yet hiding His presence enough so that people who want to choose to ignore Him can do it. This way, their choice of destiny is really free."*
14. — J. P. Moreland
15. *"God wants all men to love Him, without compulsion or coercion. God could force men to love Him if that was His will, but of course, this is not real love."^[6]*
16. Giving a person some [evidence](#), or making them aware of something or someone's existence, is not an interference with their free will. God could appear and demonstrate his existence but people would still have a choice whether to worship him ([Satan](#), who presumably knows God exists, demonstrates this choice is possible).^[2]
17. Traditional [scriptures](#) show God frequently giving people (and even [Satan](#), who nevertheless still rejects him) overwhelming evidence of his existence through [miracles](#), and evidently this does not interfere with their free will — or, at least, God as portrayed in these texts does not value free will highly. Also, the free will objection seems to imply that God wants people to believe in him without sufficient evidence; however, there appears to be no good reason for him to want this.

18. This argument is [incompatible with some other apologetics](#), such as [atheists know there is a God, argument from scriptural miracles](#).


19. Soul-making theodicy

20. Along similar lines is the soul-making theodicy: God cares about our spiritual development and giving direct evidence would undermine that goal. However, it seems unlikely this goal would preempt God supposed desire to have a loving relationship with everyone. It is hard to see how keeping most people in the dark about God's existence, many for their entire lives, is really in peoples' best interests.
21. Also, there is no clear reason why God can't create people in the desired end state without having to go through the process of development.

22. Lack of evidence allows faith

23. *Main Article: [God enables faith by withholding proof](#)*
24. Apologists argue that since [faith](#) is virtuous, God does not provide clear evidence because it would make faith unnecessary.
25. *"If God so desired, He could simply appear and prove to the whole world that He exists. But if He did that, there would be no need for faith."^[7]*
26. This is refuted by many instances in scripture in which evidence is available.

27. God does not intend for salvation for everyone

28. Many [Calvinists](#) have claimed that the argument from non-belief is inapplicable to Calvinism, because Calvinism holds that God does not want all persons to be saved. This, however, requires an implausible understanding of Biblical passages such as [1 Timothy 2:4](#) . Also, while Calvinism may not claim God wants everyone to be saved, Calvinists have typically claimed that God wants everyone to be aware of his existence, and in fact all people are aware of God's existence.^[9] The Calvinist view also raises the [problem of Hell](#).

29. The unknown purpose defense

30. [Alvin Plantinga](#) writes that the statement "We can see no good reason for God to do X" only implies "There is no good reason for God to do X" on the assumption that "If there were a good reason for God to do X, we would be able to see it," which he suggests is absurd. God may have some mysterious reason for avoiding communication that we cannot understand.
31. Let X be "having all humans to believe God exists before they die". Not only is there no good reason for God to refrain from doing X, but it is also irrational for God- especially the Christian God- not to do X. Relationships are something within human understanding. The Christian God supposedly cares terribly about matters of belief and interaction with humans, as depicted in the bible and other holy books; hence if such a God deeply desires to do X and attempts to do X but fails (as attempting to reveal a religion to all humanity and convince everyone about its validity), then this omnipotent and omniscient being does not exist.
32. God would not want a relationship with humans but make them incapable of understanding that relationship.^[2]
33. Along similar lines, there is the claim of an unknown reason that causes God to delay communication:
34. *"God's existence may not be evident to someone at certain stages of his life but may become evident when and through what means God chooses."^[5]*
35. Drange's formulation of the argument (see above) is also a good reply to these theodicies.

You did not sincerely seek for God

Apologists claim that one simply has to [seek god with a sincere heart](#) to find him. When this fails, they blame the non-believer for not truly seeking God.

"An atheist might say, "I can't find God anywhere!" But an atheist cannot find God for the same reason that a theist cannot find a policeman. He is not truly interested in finding Him. Once the atheist is an agnostic there is a basis for communication.^[8]"

"He imagines himself to be sincere and earnest in seeking God, when in truth he may not be. There is a large literature on the incredible human capacity for rationalization and self-deception that is relevant here.^[5]"

"They can't find God because first of all, they aren't looking; and second they want to avoid him.^[9]"

The apologist is claiming knowledge of the non-believers mental state that they can't possibly know (similar to the claim that [you just want to sin](#)).

"[...]one would have to believe that every non-Christian is lying, either about God's existence being evident or about being sincere.^[5]"

This argument cannot account the many non-believers who were once sincere Christians, including ministers ([Dan Barker](#), [Farrell Till](#), [John W. Loftus](#)), ministers in training ([Matt Dillahunty](#)) and aspiring apologist-scholars ([Robert M. Price](#), [Bart Ehrman](#)).

God obviously exists

One premise may be rejected by claiming [God obviously exists](#). This claim is not accepted by non-believers.

Scriptural arguments

Main Article: [Argument from scripture](#)

"By love, God has revealed himself and given himself to man. He has thus provided the definitive, superabundant answer to the questions that man asks himself about the meaning and purpose of his life."

— Catechism of the Catholic Church, 68

"For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse"

— [Romans 1:20](#) 

These are [arguments from authority](#). Skeptics require these sources to be established as reliable before they can be relied upon.

Related argument from vagueness

1. God either does or does not reveal his existence
2. If God does not reveal his existence, there is no reason for belief (**evidentialism**)
3. If God does reveal his existence, there is no reason for belief, only knowledge
4. The problem of vagueness indicates that there is an unclear ground for belief.

Other counter-objections

One can avoid the free will defense by reformulating the argument as follows (P=Premise, C=Conclusion):

P1. If God existed, he would want to ensure a situation where a person employing any reasonable epistemology, would be able to believe that he existed and to know at least some of his characteristics. Because of God's omnipotence, this would mean that such a situation would come about.

P2. An epistemology based upon methodologies shown to be successful in gathering knowledge usefully applicable in the real world in a publicly verifiable way is reasonable when contrasted with one that is not successful in said way, but an epistemology based upon methodologies NOT shown to be successful in gathering knowledge usefully applicable in the real world in a publicly verifiable way is UNreasonable when contrasted with one that IS successful in said way.

P3. Epistemologies may be divided into methodological naturalism and methodological supernaturalism.

P4. Based on P3 and the criteria in P2, methodological naturalism wins over methodological supernaturalism.

P5. Methodological supernaturalism (e.g. prayer, revelation, inspiration, reading an inspired book) is necessary to know any of God's characteristics.

C1. From P2-P4, methodological naturalism is a reasonable epistemology.

C2. From P5 and C1, there exists a reasonable epistemology within which God's characteristics cannot be known.

C3. From C2 and P1, God does not exist.

It is also worth pointing out that there is no useful difference between "there is no good reason for a god to do X" and "there *is* a good reason for a god to do X, but we don't/can't know it".

See also

- [Argument from inconsistent revelations](#)
- [Christians disagree over everything](#)
- [God has poor communication skills](#)

External link

- [The Argument from \(Reasonable\) Nonbelief at Internet Infidels](#)
- [The Argument from Reason for the Nonexistence of God at Internet Infidels](#)

References

1. ↑ [1]
2. ↑ ^{2.0} ^{2.1} ^{2.2} ^{2.3} [2]

3. [↑](#) [\[3\]](#)
 4. [↑](#) David and Randall Basinger, The Problem with The Problem of Evil, *Religious Studies* 30 (1994): pp. 89-97
 5. [↑](#) [5.0](#) [5.1](#) [5.2](#) [5.3](#) [\[4\]](#)
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 8. [↑](#) Dan DeHaan, *The God You Can Know*, 2001
 9. [↑](#) [\[7\]](#)
- Theodore Drange. *Nonbelief and Evil: Two Arguments for the Nonexistence of God*. Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1998.
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Problem of evil

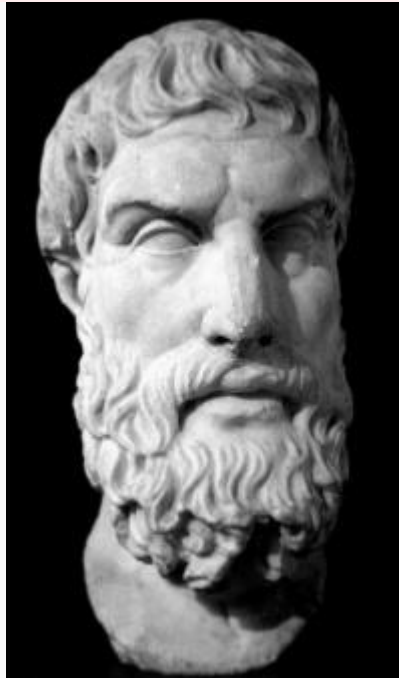


For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[Problem of evil](#)



For more information, see the Atheist Debates video on [The Problem of Evil](#).



Epicurus first expounded the problem of evil

The logical **problem of evil** points out a [contradiction](#) in the traditional conceptions of the nature of [God](#) and the current state of the world.

As [Epicurus](#) pointed out:

"Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able? Then he is not omnipotent. Is he able, but not willing? Then he is malevolent. Is he both able and willing? Then whence cometh evil? Is he neither able nor willing? Then why call him God?"

There are many counter arguments to the problem of evil. Arguments that justify the existence of evil are known as theodicies, a term coined by [Gottfried Leibniz](#). A theodicy can generally be divided into four categories, each typically rejecting one of the four premises used to make the argument. The argument is, after all, not an argument for the non-existence of God but an argument for the non-existence of God with all three of the characteristics of [omniscience](#), [omnipotence](#), and [omnibenevolence](#) in the presence of evil.

Many counter arguments rely on wild and unsubstantiated speculation:

"So how do theists respond to arguments like this? [The Argument from Evil] They say there is a reason for evil, but it is a mystery. Well, let me tell you this: I'm actually one hundred feet tall even though I only appear to be six feet tall. You ask me for proof of this. I have a simple answer: it's a mystery. Just accept my word for it on faith. And that's just the logic theists use in their discussions of evil. [\[1\]](#)"

Most theodicies crumble in the face of easily prevented, extremely "evil" acts, such as the rape and murder of a child, or a gross atrocity like the holocaust, [slavery](#) or other genocides. Many theodicies have worse implications than the original problem.

Closely related problems include the [problem of suffering](#), the [Kalam cosmological problem of evil](#), the [problem of non-God objects](#) and the [evidential problem of evil](#).

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The argument

The logical problem of evil is usually stated:

1. Premise: **Evil** exists.
2. Premise: God is **omnipotent**: he is capable of doing something about evil.
3. Premise: God is **omnibenevolent**: he does not want evil to exist.
4. Premise: God is **omniscient**: he must know about all evil in the world.
5. From (2-4), a God with this attributes would prevent evil occurring
6. From (5), evil exists ergo God does not exist

However, this results in a [contradiction](#) because evil cannot both exist and not exist. Dropping any one of those four premises would resolve the contradiction, but dropping #1 would require us to fundamentally redefine evil in some way, and dropping the other three would undermine the [Christian](#) concept of God. Accepting all four premises would lead to [irrational theism](#), which is belief that is contrary to evidence and reason.

The argument makes two implicit assumptions about God: ^[2]

1. An omnibenevolent God attempts to eliminate evil as far as it can.
2. An omnipotent God can eliminate evil.

These two assumptions are most often the target of counter arguments.

[David Hume](#) expressed the argument as:

"Why is there any misery at all in the world? Not by chance surely. From some cause then. Is it from the intention of the Deity? But he is perfectly benevolent. Is it contrary to his intention? But he is almighty. Nothing can shake the solidity of this reasoning, so short, so clear, so decisive; except we assert, that these subjects exceed all human capacity"

Counter arguments: God is not omnipotent

These arguments attack the premise that God is omnipotent or limit the concept so as to avoid the unwanted conclusion.

Free will defense

It is often claimed that evil exists because God gave humans [free will](#). According to the Bible, God's gift of free will led to the fall of [Adam and Eve](#) through their [original sin](#). Free will is assumed to be a greater good than the evil that it causes or is needed by God to serve some purpose. For example, free will is required for people to love God in a free and open fashion. So if a young girl is raped and murdered, this is because God needed the rapist's free will so that his actions could result in greater good or so that the rapist could freely love God.

"the origin of evil is not the Creator but the creature's freely choosing sin and selfishness ^[3]"

One undesirable implication of the free will defence is that *any* interaction of God on the universe would be a potential violation of free will. ^[4]

Plantinga: Possibly the best possible world



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[Alvin Plantinga's free will defense](#)



Alvin Plantinga in 2009

Apologists such as [Alvin Plantinga](#) argue for the *possibility* that God could not have created a better world. Therefore, an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God may *possibly* be compatible with evil. Since they are *possibly* compatible, the axioms of the problem of evil do not imply a contradiction. ^[5]

"It is possible that God, even being omnipotent, could not create a world with free creatures who never choose evil. Furthermore, it is possible that God, even being omnibenevolent, would desire to create a world which contains evil if moral goodness requires free moral creatures."

"The fact that free creatures sometimes go wrong, however, counts neither against God's omnipotence nor against His goodness; for He could have forestalled the occurrence of moral evil only by removing the possibility of moral good."

This theodicy suggests that no improvement may be made to the world because doing so would violate [free will](#). According to this argument, it is impossible for God to intervene to prevent a murder.

"So long as it is even possible that God has morally sufficient reasons for permitting evil, it follows that God and evil are logically consistent. ^[6]"

See also:

- [The Free Will Defense Refuted and God's Existence Disproved](#)

Thought crimes

An alternative version is based on the concept that some thoughts are evil, even if they are not acted upon. If God were to eliminate all evil, this would limit freedom of thought.

"Evil is destructive whether it is acted out or not. Hatred and bigotry in someone's heart is wrong. If it is wrong and if God is to stop all evil, then He must stop that person from thinking his own thoughts. To do that, God must remove his freedom of thought. ^[7]"

This assumes freedom of thought is more important than the non-existence of evil, which has not been established by the apologist.

Natural evil



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

Natural evil



Tsunami damage which God did not prevent

The free will defence and "best possible worlds" theories fail to explain why God allows natural disasters, such as hurricanes, tsunamis, and earthquakes. These are collectively known as "natural evil" and kill large numbers of people based on geographical locations. This indicates that the concept of "evil" is not necessarily tied to what people do. Furthermore, it fails to account for evil done to people against their will. The argument of free will is used to justify why an infant can be killed, however the infant invoked no measure of free will to allow for this evil to result. So in order to give the gift of free will to this infant, the child is murdered without having any choice in the matter.

"All you have to do is want into any children's hospital and you know there is no God. At least no good God. May be there is an evil God."

— [Dan Barker](#)^[8]

"The child born without limbs, the sightless fly, the sightless fly, the vanished species-these are nothing less than Mother Nature caught in the act of throwing her clay. No perfect God could maintain such incongruities. It is worth mentioning that if God created the world and all things in it, he created smallpox, plague, and filariasis. Any person who intentionally loosed such horrors upon the earth would be ground to dust for his crimes."

— [Sam Harris](#), *The End of Faith*

Even if we define natural disasters as not being evil, there remains the fact that they occur, and that [God does not prevent them or the deaths and suffering they cause](#). If we replace "evil" with "suffering" in the discussion above, the

problem remains: either God is unaware of people's suffering, and is therefore not omniscient; or he is unable to do anything, and is therefore not omnipotent; or he is unwilling to intervene, and is therefore not omnibenevolent.

Some apologists argue that natural disasters are [attempts by God to influence human behaviour](#). An omnipotent God should have better means of communicating which do not inflict needless suffering.

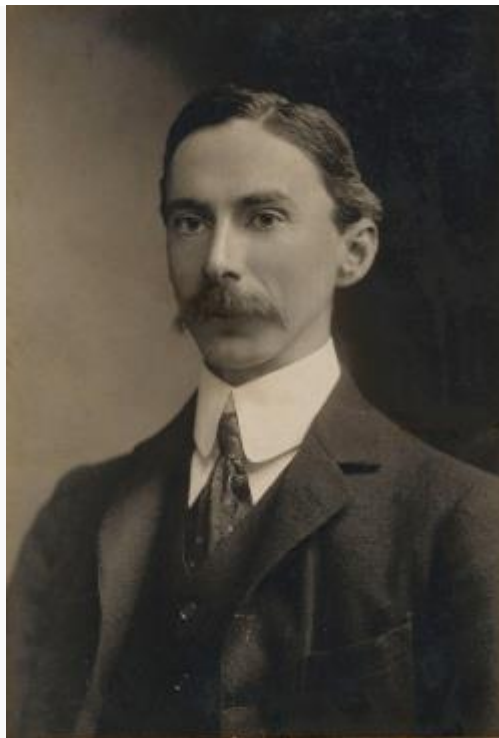
Free will does not exist

Evidence uncovered by psychologists undermines the existence of free will. What moral choices are explained partly by our culture, by our upbringing, by our genes, even by the state of our brains (since some types of brain damage affect our moral decisions and our capacity to lead a morally good life).

Many philosophers have dismissed free will because the universe apparently operates based on causality or natural laws. This implies [hard determinism](#), which is usually considered to be incompatible with free will. Free will is also incompatible with a God having [omniscience](#).

Arguably, free will is total freedom of action without limitation. Since humans are limited by practical concerns, they do not have free will.

Free will is not a defence



Bertrand Russell in 1907

Even if human [sin](#) is the cause of evil, God is still ultimately responsible, since he could have foreseen the outcome and God created humans anyway knowing they would sin. Alternatively, God could have chosen not to create humans at all. If God cannot do evil and any world (supposedly) must contain at least some evil, not creating the world would seem to be a viable option. In other words, the problem of evil raises the related [problem of non-God objects](#).

"The world, we are told, was created by a God who is both good and [omnipotent](#). Before He created the world He foresaw all the pain and misery that it would contain; He is therefore responsible for all of it. It is useless to argue that the pain in the world is due to sin. In the first place, this is not true; it is not sin that causes rivers to overflow their banks or volcanoes to erupt. But even if it were true, it would make no difference. If I were going to beget a child knowing that the child was going to be a homicidal maniac, I should be responsible for his crimes. If God knew in advance the sins of which man would be guilty, He was clearly responsible for all the consequences of those sins when He decided to create man. ^[9]"

— [Bertrand Russell](#)

A better world is possible



Portrait of David Hume

It is easy to propose improvements to the world, which directly refutes Plantinga's argument that we possibly live in the best possible world.

"[Suppose] I show you a house or palace, where there was not one apartment convenient or agreeable; [...]; you would certainly blame the contrivance, without any further examination. The architect would in vain display his subtlety, and prove to you, that if this door or that window were altered, greater ills would ensue. What he says may be strictly true: The alteration of one particular, while the other parts of the building remain, may only augment the inconveniences. But still you would assert in general, that, if the architect had had skill and good intentions, he might have formed such a plan of the whole, and might have adjusted the parts in such a manner, as would have remedied all or most of these inconveniences. His ignorance, or even your own ignorance of such a plan, will never convince you of the impossibility of it. If you find any inconveniences and deformities in the building, you will always, without entering into any detail, condemn the architect."

— [David Hume](#)

"For example, imagine that our world had one less violent human act, or one less tragic natural disaster. ^[10]"

God could allow free choice but intervene to reduce or mitigate the harm one person inflicts on another. This is a simple improvement that would reduce suffering and evil overall without interfering with free choice directly.

God could have made humans less lazy. This would obviously result in an overall benefit without interfering with free will.

"Let [humans] be endowed with a greater propensity to industry and labour; a more vigorous spring and activity of mind; a more constant bent to business and application. [...] Almost all the moral, as well as natural evils of human life, arise from idleness [...] Here our demands may be allowed very humble, and therefore the more reasonable. ^[11]"

The obvious non-optimal design of the world leads to the [argument from poor design](#) for God's non-existence.

Heaven

If [Heaven](#) exists, the problem of evil is strengthened. If God can allow people to have a worthwhile existence in Heaven in the future (where no evil exists), there is no obvious reason why evil exists now. As Mackie asked: ^[12]

Why could [God] not have made men such that they always freely choose the good? Even if man is believed to have free will, God could have created humans such that they would always freely choose the good. This he did not do and is therefore ultimately responsible and blameworthy for any evil act which humans perform. For at least some theists, this difficulty is made even more acute by some of their further beliefs: I mean those who envisage a happier or more perfect state of affairs than now exists, whether they look forward to the kingdom of God on earth, or confine their optimism to the expectation of heaven. In either case they are explicitly recognizing the possibility of a state of affairs in which created beings always freely choose the good. If such a state of affairs is coherent enough to be the object of a reasonable hope or faith, it is hard to explain why it does not obtain already.

If heaven exists, a better world is clearly possible. God could have just created a group of people in Heaven and simply omit creating Earth and [Hell](#).

Other moral agents exist

Other moral agents, such as evil spirits, could be the cause of evil. This is effectively relying on [polytheism](#), which is not a favored tactic of most apologists.

Some humans lack free will

Some medical conditions result in people being born apparently without free will. Other people seem to lose their free will by coercion, medial reasons or brain washing. If the free will defence is employed, it raises the "problem of lack of free will". One cannot argue that God considers free will as necessary and at the same time that he allows some people not to have it.

Why can humans limit freedom of humans while God cannot?

We find it morally acceptable to incarcerate people who are dangerous, in order to limit their choices and mitigate their harm. It is contradictory to claim that humans can limit freedoms at the same time as say God could not limit the harm caused by very morally evil people.

"Why, if this argument would be unacceptable coming from a human being, should we think it any more acceptable coming from God? ^[13]"

Conversely, if God wishes people to exercise their will freely, including criminals to go on crime sprees, this implies human attempts at reducing crime is an act that is contrary to the will of God. This absurd conclusion illustrates that mitigating the harm people do cannot be immoral, even for God.

"If evil is merely the harbinger of greater good, why should we be opposed to its occurrence, and why, indeed, should we be expected to prevent it? ^[14]"

Free will is superior

The free will defence often relies on the supposed fact that humans with free will are better than humans without free will or total non-existence. This has not been established and is pure speculation.

"'God thought it good to create free persons' (p. 170) [because] '[a] world containing creatures who are sometimes significantly free (and [who] freely perform more good actions than evil ones) is more valuable, all else being equal, than a world containing no free creatures at all.' (p. 166) ^[15]"

Moral good requires the possibility of moral evil

"God could not have created a universe containing moral good (or as much moral good as this world contains) without creating one that also contained moral evil ^[5]"

The free will defence often relies on the supposed fact that moral good was created by God but requires the humans that sometimes choose to do morally evil acts. In Plantinga's jargon, it is possible that "every essence suffers from transworld depravity." This has not been established and is pure speculation.

Some [compatibilist](#) philosophers (who accept both [determinism](#) and [free will](#)) claim that God could have created a world where people always choose good.

"There is nothing logically inconsistent about a free agent that always chooses the good. ^[13]"

As mentioned above, the existence of heaven would show that moral good can exist apart from moral evil.


God could influence people while still allowing free choice

Holy books often refer to direct interactions between God and humans. This apparently does not remove the human's free will. According to scripture, interaction with God influences people he interacts with. Many theists also pray for God's guidance and believe they receive it. Based on these precedents, God should be capable of influencing people to do good. If God actually influences people to be good (and supposing God is omnipotent), this would greatly reduce or eliminate evil while still allowing for free will. We would also expect to see a sustained effort on the part of God to influence humans. However, there is no evidence this occurs and significant evil still exists.

"God can still do lots of things so that people will more often choose to do morally right things freely, even if He can't absolutely guarantee it. [...] After all, people's evil decisions don't come entirely from a vacuum. God

can do lots of things to make it more likely that people would freely do morally good actions (things having to do with genetics, the environment, the temperament that people have, etc.), so that not all of the evils caused by people nowadays are necessary in order to have a world in which people are significantly free. ^[16]"

God could kill evil doers

God could simply kill off evil doers in an open and obvious manner. This would prevent future evil. This often happens in the [Old Testament Genesis 19:24-25](#) , so it is impossible to argue this is contrary to the nature of God (at least as described in the [Bible](#)) or would violate their free will. The fact that it does not happen now raises the problem of evil.

If killing is too drastic, God could certainly mitigate the harm caused by evil. Since this does not happen, we face the [problem of suffering](#).

Leibniz: Best of all possible worlds



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[Best of all possible worlds](#)



Portrait of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz

According to [Gottfried Leibniz](#), we currently live in the best possible world that God could have created. While theologians debate if God is *obligated* to create the best possible world, it is often considered obvious that God would do so. There exists the most amount of good and the least amount of evil. A universe with less evil would be less desirable or impossible. ^[10]

The reason that God could not create a better world is unknown. Therefore this is an [argument from ignorance](#). For this reason, most apologists prefer Plantinga's free will defence.

Since it is fairly easy to imagine a better world, this argument seems to be refuted.

Alternatively, there may be an infinite series of better worlds, with no "best world". If God decided to create a world, there always be better possible worlds than the actual world. So the choice of this particular one would be less optimal than some alternatives.

Irenaean theodicy: God's tough love



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

Irenaean theodicy

Apologists often claim that what appears to be harmful to humans may, in fact, be for humanity's good. How can we learn, the argument goes, without making our own mistakes? This is sometimes referred to as the "soul-making theodicy". Irenaean theodicy considers evil as God's means to enable humans to fully develop or to fully know God.

"it is quite possible that God uses the suffering to do good. In other words, He produces patience through tribulation (Romans 5:3 📖) [17]"

"The basic idea is that suffering of innocents will help them to become stronger. All evil offers us the possibility to learn from it and grow into a better human being. [17]"

"Second, God may be letting evil run its course in order to prove that evil is malignant and that suffering, which is the unfortunate product of evil, is further proof that anything contrary to God's will is bad, harmful, painful, and leads to death. [17]"

The "tough love" argument only works if God is limited in power. If God is omnipotent there is nothing he can not teach us gently that he can teach us harshly. If he is benevolent than he would never choose to teach us a harsh lesson when it could be taught, with exactly the same impact, gently.

Another problem with this argument is that although according to this argument, God wants us to grow as people by learning from our mistakes, according to most religious doctrine he also wants worship. Worship involves complete obedience and submission, whereas learning from mistakes requires using one's intelligence. It is contradictory to claim that God wants us to be both completely obedient and make decisions for ourselves, since complete obedience means blindly obeying authority, for example the story of **Abraham** and **Issac** (**Genesis 22:1-19** 📖). Abraham was called "righteous" because he blindly obeyed God's command to murder his son. The fact that God stopped Abraham before the knife fell means nothing- even if he had allowed the murder, Abraham would still be called righteous for obeying God's command.

Apologists sometimes argue that some virtues can only expressed it in the face of evil. [18] However, the need or desirability to express these virtues has not been established.

A further problem is if it is desirable to have people with a developed character, God could simply create people in the final state and avoid the need for humans to develop. This would make evil redundant.

"If God is all powerful he could have eliminated the need for evil by making us characterized to begin with. ^[17]"

Really powerful, but not all-powerful

God is not all-powerful in the sense that he can create [a rock so heavy that even he cannot lift it](#). So, God is omnibenevolent, omniscient, and really really powerful.

"But supposing the Author of Nature to be finitely perfect, though far exceeding mankind, a satisfactory account may then be given of natural and moral evil, and every untoward phenomenon be explained and adjusted. A less evil may then be chosen, in order to avoid a greater; inconveniences be submitted to, in order to reach a desirable end; and in a word, benevolence, regulated by wisdom, and limited by necessity, may produce just such a world as the present. ^[11]"

The problem with this argument is there is still more evil than would be expected if God was very powerful. If a child is raped and killed, is this because God is not powerful enough to prevent it? I could prevent that and would strive to with the smallest degree of foreknowledge. So if this argument is to succeed it must conclude that I am more powerful than God. And more benevolent. In fact, the general disorder of the universe is the basis for the [argument from poor design](#).

Frequent divine interventions would cause chaos

"[...] for the most part, the existence of free will and of order in the physical universe are inexorable facts. While we might wish for such miraculous deliverance to occur more frequently, the consequences of interrupting these two sets of forces would be utter chaos."

— Francis Collins, *The Language of God*

An omnipotent God could intervene to minimize chaos.

For human action, it is easy to imagine that God could intervene regularly in certain circumstances such as to prevent murder. For instance, all murder victims would be miraculously healed or resurrected *after* the attack, while the murderer is still free to exercise his free will. This would not cause chaos because the regularity of the intervention would be perfectly predictable to humans. Murder is a relatively rare occurrence, so its prevention would cause minimal disruption.

In terms of natural evil, God could quite easily modify the earth to be more benign, in terms of reducing natural disasters. The means to do this would hardly affect human affairs. The outcome would clearly benefit human existence. Natural evil is as much an [argument from poor design](#) as the problem of evil.

Unspecified reason for God's inability to prevent evil

This undermines the concept that God is actually omnipotent. Usually this is framed by apologists as an "impossibility" for God to prevent evil. This is [special pleading](#) - if there is a reason God cannot intervene, let us hear it - otherwise, we cannot simply draw conclusions about God based on unknown arguments. An omnipotent God should be able to intervene because that is the meaning of omnipotence.

How would one tell the difference between an *omnipotent* god who allows and/or causes evil/suffering without explaining why, and an *non-omnipotent*, or indifferent, god?

God does not exist

God is unable to prevent evil because God does not exist. The problem of evil does not apply to non-existent gods.

"The only excuse for God is that He does not exist."

Counter arguments: God is not omnibenevolent

These arguments attack the premise that God is omnibenevolent or limit the concept so as to avoid the unwanted conclusion.

Punishment theodicy: evil is a consequence of disobeying God

Main Article: [Evil is a consequence of disobeying God](#)



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[Augustinian theodicy](#)

Evil exists not because it was created by God but because it results from our disobeying God's divine laws. Because God is supposedly "all just", he must punish evil. However, God being "all just" is [incompatible](#) with God being omnibenevolent (or being all merciful). One form of the argument is Augustinian theodicy, which blames evil on [the fall](#) and expulsion from [Eden](#). God is good and does good, but any evil you do you brought upon yourself. This principle is also the theodicy of Islam.

"ultimately, no one is innocent. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23 📖) and are by nature children of wrath (Eph. 2:3 📖). There is none innocent. [7]"

"Allah has placed a physical law and a moral law in this universe. Allah allows suffering to occur when one or more of these laws are broken. The physical law is based on cause and effect. Sickness comes if one does not take care of one's health or is exposed to infections. A car accident occurs when one is not alert, or drives in a careless manner, or if the cars are not checked, roads and freeways are not made and kept in right shape, or the traffic laws are not right or not properly enforced. [19]"

This explanation argues that God has created an earthly consequence for disobeying divine laws.

There are at least two problems with this argument:

1. Seemingly innocent people being victims of evil. This includes people being killed inside places of worship^[20], which would be safe if God protected the faithful as some apologists claim.^[21] Apologists argue that everyone has [original sin](#) and are therefore worthy of punishment. This relies on the questionable notion of collective guilt.
2. The problem with this argument is there is no clear connection between [sin](#) and evil. Evil people often live long happy lives while virtuous people often have short miserable lives. The arbitrariness of victims of natural evil is particularly noticeable. If there was a connection, it would be observable, quantifiable and verifiable. This there is not any connection, the theodicy fails.

3. If you are raped, you were bad. If you have a holocaust happen to you, you were bad. If something bad happens to you, you brought it on yourself. This theodicy consists of blaming the victim, in the case of a baby born sick or disabled it blames the parents.
4. [Muslims](#) considers Allah to be good, wise and just. However, since he has many other attributes, he is benevolence is not considered to be absolute.
5. *"God is seen as one and unique in context of all his names and attributes. So if God was just good and omnipotent, then there may be problem in reconciling suffering and evil in the world. However if you include attributes such as 'the Severe in Punishment' and 'the Wise', these problems would not exist. ^[18]"*



6. God is omnibenevolent to something non-human

7. Another way to redefine 'benevolence' is to argue that God may be benevolent to specific humans or to non-humans. Our entire history may exist for the positive influence it may have on aliens we have not met. We may be actors in a puppet show that makes these beings happy. After all, it is perfectly possible for benevolent humans to play comically violent video games with their delighted children.
8. But this argument is sophistry. To win the argument the apologist defines a God that neither we nor he would have much reason to worship. For example, if the creatures in a violent "Run and Gun" video game were to gain self awareness, would we expect them to view us as benevolent beings worthy of their love and trust as we blast them into electronic oblivion?
9. And, if God is not benevolent toward humans, then what differentiates him from a human sociopath or from the [Devil](#)?
10. The problem of evil must be taken up in the context of humanity. No other context would make a God useful to humans in any realistic way. A God that is benevolent to others at lethal expense to humans is, by definition, malevolent, or at least indifferent, toward humans. It is an unusual apologist indeed who believes in this type of God.

11. God is benevolent to the point of impotence

12. Some claim that since God is omnibenevolent, he loves all his creatures, even [Satan](#), who is considered by many to be the embodiment of evil. Therefore it would violate his omnibenevolence to simply destroy Satan or any other evil creation. This of course implies that God is not omnipotent. It is also contradicted by the Bible, which states that God hates evil.

13. Perfection implies no lacking in evil

14. [God is also evil](#). The problem of evil does not apply if we accept that.
15. *"I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things."*
16. — [Isaiah 45:7](#) 
17. *"I devoted my first childish literary trifle, my first written philosophical exercise, to [the origin of evil]—and so far as my "solution" to it at that time is concerned, well, I gave that honour to God, as is reasonable, and made him the father of evil."*
18. — [Friedrich Nietzsche](#) ^[22]
19. According to Christianity, God supposedly places those in authority in power [Romans 13:1](#) , including corrupt and psychotic leaders. [God commanded atrocities in the Old Testament](#). Jesus allowed a [herd of pigs to drown for no reason](#).

20. God allows evil so that the good is appreciated

21. God wants to be loved and is very vain. He wants to be loved so much that he allows many evils to befall mankind so that they appreciate the good more. Much as the blind man healed by Jesus appreciated his sight more because of his blindness.

22. Evil is allowed to justify God's punishment

23. God may allow evil to justify his punishment of sinners.
24. *"A third possible reason that God is letting evil occur is so that on the day of judgment the condemned will have no right to say that their sentence is unjust."*^[7]
25. This assumes the punishment itself is inevitable and just, which has not been established. It seems like God is setting up some humans to fail, which is not consistent with omnibenevolence. Also, it is an [appeal to consequences](#).

26. Existence of evil glorifies God

27. A further question is why does God allow [Satan](#) to continue to exist, which raises the problem of evil. Some apologists argue that God will be more glorified if he allows Satan to exist, which is not an [omnibenevolent](#) attitude.
28. *"he knows that when we walk in and out of those temptations [caused by Satan], struggling both with the physical and moral effects that they bring, more of God's glory will shine in that battle than if he took Satan out yesterday."*^[23]
29. *"Yes, paradoxical as it may sound, Satan's way of governing has in reality served to glorify God."*^[24]

30. Unspecified reason for not preventing evil

31. Apologists sometimes argue that God has a reason not to address evil which may be unknown or unknowable to humans.
32. *"it is possible that God has reasons for allowing evil to exist that we simply cannot understand."*^[7]
33. *"God's wisdom, as there may be divine wisdom in permitting evil and suffering. Even if we can't evaluate what the wisdom is, it doesn't mean it is not there. To argue such a thing would be a logical fallacy, known as the argument from ignorance ([argumentum ad ignorantiam](#))."*^[18]
34. This undermines the concept that God is actually good. No reason can justify a "good" God from not doing good, apart from an inability to do so.
35. How would one tell the difference between a good god who allows and/or causes evil/suffering without explaining why, and an evil, or indifferent, god?


36. Counter arguments: God is not omniscient

37. These arguments attack the premise that God is [omniscient](#) or limit the concept so as to avoid the unwanted conclusion. Unlike the other characteristics of God, omniscience isn't necessarily required for the argument.

38. God does good, Satan does evil

39. God only has limited omniscience, he cannot see the future. God simply did not know that [Satan](#) would turn against him because he cannot know the future. Satan blindsided God, who lacks future knowledge, and created evil himself. God was betrayed and Satan is the reason evil exists.
40. Any situation God did not foresee can still be addressed through the power of omnipotence. If God is all-good, all-powerful and knows Satan exists now, he should snuff out Satan and promptly remove all evil from the world.

41. Evil is a test theodicy

42. Evil is needed so that God can test people.
43. *"Earthly life is just a test. God has thrown us into this world full of evil and pointless suffering in order to find out what kind of beings we are. Without the pointless suffering, his test is not complete. If we pass, we go to heaven. If we fail, we go to hell. ^[17]"*
44. *"The One Who created death and life, so that He may put you to test, to find out which of you is best in deeds: He is the all-Almighty, the all-Forgiving"*
45. — [Surah 67:2](#) 
46. If God is omniscient, then God already knows what humans will do in any test, rendering the exercise (and the pain caused by evil) pointless and unnecessary.
47. The necessity of the test itself has not been established. God is just inflicting evil, in the form of a test, for no apparent reason.

48. Counter arguments: Evil does not exist

49. These arguments attack the premise that evil exists or limits the concept in some way.


50. Evil is an illusion

51. We believe that evil exists because we view things like genocide as bad. We are simply wrong, all of these things are good.
52. Which suggests that everything which has ever happened is objectively good: [rape](#), the holocaust, [slavery](#), genocide. In order defend this theodicy, a proponent would need to agree that any horrific thing you could mention is a good thing to do.
53. Although not generally accepted by most theists, many philosophers consider evil to be [subjective](#), a human construction or a meaningless concept ([moral nihilism](#)). In this case, the problem of evil has invalid axioms.

54. Humans cannot judge if evil exists

55. Apologists such as [Gottfried Leibniz](#) argue that humans are not able to judge the universe because of our limited experience. ^[25]
56. *"if theism is true we would expect that there would be inscrutable evil. Indeed, a little reflection shows there is no reason to think we could so much as grasp God's plans here, even if he proposed to divulge them to us. But then the fact that there is inscrutable evil does not make it improbable that God exists. ^[26]"*
57. Judging the overall state of the universe is unnecessary to make the more limited observation that "evil exists".

58. It is all part of God's plan theodicy

59. God's divine plan is good. What we think is evil is not, rather it's a part of God's plan we are misidentifying as evil because we cannot see the big picture.
60. *"What they did was wrong and Joseph suffered greatly for it. But, later, God raised up Joseph in Egypt to make provisions for the people of that land during the coming drought of seven years. Not only was Egypt saved but also his family and brothers who originally sold him into slavery. Joseph finally says to them, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good" (Genesis 50:15-21 ). ^[7]"*
61. *"Do you know why God subjects you to so many miseries? That He may bestow on you the riches of heaven."*
62. — [St. Paul of the Cross](#)

63. The holocaust is part of God's divine plan? Young girls being raped and murdered is part of God's plan? If such things are part of God's plan, even without seeing the big picture one must conclude that it's a [really bad plan](#).
64. Furthermore, what is the point of a plan if one is all powerful? There are no steps needed; simply create the end results. This presumably would avoid the need for evil to exist at all.
65. There is no evidence of a divine plan. This counter argument is mere speculation with an unfounded basis.
66. *"These arbitrary suppositions can never be admitted, contrary to matter of fact, visible and uncontroverted. Whence can any cause be known but from its known effects? Whence can any hypothesis be proved but from the apparent phenomena? To establish one hypothesis upon another, is building entirely in the air; and the utmost we ever attain, by these conjectures and fictions, is to ascertain the bare possibility of our opinion; but never can we, upon such terms, establish its reality."* ^[27]

67. Divine morality differs from human morality

68. As with "benevolence", "evil" can be redefined. What is "evil" for humans may not be evil for God. In fact, anything that God chooses to do can be construed as "good", which is the premise of [divine command theory](#). Using this argument, "evil" can not exist in any definable terms when applied to God.
69. The apologist treads dangerously close to moral relativism. We know from information in the [Bible](#) that moral rules have changed at the will of God. Is God, then, a moral relativist?
70. *"In general terms the word 'good' has a meaning that relates to human experience, whereas in Islamic theology 'good' as an attribute of God is primarily viewed as a unique attribute that can be appreciated but not fully comprehended due to his uniqueness and transcendental nature."* ^[18]
71. If the answer is that God is following a moral plan, then the apologist opens himself up to the [Euthyphro dilemma](#). If the answer is that God changes as he sees fit and anything that god declares as good is good, then what is the difference between being a relativist and following a relativist God?
72. When an apologist tries to redefine the premises of "the problem of evil" he finds himself in a morass of relativism, but when he tries to work with the premises he finds himself unwittingly limiting the unlimited God of his religion.

73. Evil is the absence of Good

74. Just as cold is the absence of hot and dark is the absence of light, evil is the absence of good. This is intended to challenge that evil requires creating at all.
75. The problem of evil can be simply reframed as "the problem of the absence of Good". This contradicts an omnibenevolent, omnipresent deity because we would expect such a deity to intervene.
76. *"If God were omnibenevolent he would not have neglected to make the good that we are lacking in place of evil."* ^[17]
77. This argument relies on dubious [ethics](#): are evil deeds an absence of some corresponding good? Is rape an absence of unrape? Is murder an absence of unmurder? (How many people have you unraped or unmurdered today? We're committing unsins constantly!) Conversely, if baking your neighbor cookies [or name any random act of kindness] is a good deed, what is the absence of that good deed? Is it evil *not* to bake your neighbour cookies?

78. "Atheists do not have a clear concept of evil"

79. *"Relativists Can't Complain About the Problem of Evil* ^[28]"

80. Apologists may claim the argument cannot be made by an atheists because they supposedly have no clear concept of evil. This is an [ad hominem](#) attack since it does not address the argument. It is a form of [presuppositional apologetics](#). All that is necessary is that the theist accepts that the concept of evil is valid. If necessary, an atheist can simply accept the axiom of morality exists, for the sake of this argument.

81. Miscellaneous theodicies

82. Heaven exists after this world

83. After you die you can go to heaven which evens everything out in the end. Regardless of what pain and suffering exists here, heaven will balance out the scales. This was often used by religious authorities to justify torture and murder during the many inquisitions and crusades. The victims' temporary agony was justified if it saved them from the eternal agony of hell.

84. *"Last but not least, this life is a temporary. All those who suffered will not remember a thing the moment they enter Paradise.* ^[29]"

85. This has [nothing to do with the argument](#) since it does not address the logical consequence of a deity incompatible with an evil filled world. The problem of evil stands, if heaven exists or not. Also, the existence of heaven has not been reliably established.

86. God also allows good

87. Apologists point to the fact that some good exists or that there is more good than evil.

88. *"It is wrong to see one side of the coin and not to see the other side. Any philosophy that concentrates on one aspect of the creation and denies or ignores the other side is partially true and partial truths are no truth at all.* ^[19]"

89. This is a [red herring](#) since it does not address the problem of evil at all. It is reminiscent of the [argument from incomplete devastation](#).

See also

- [Theodicy](#)
- [Problem of Hell](#)
- [Kalam Cosmological Problem of Evil](#)
- [Argument from natural disasters](#)
- [Problem of suffering](#)

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21. [↑](#) [\[15\]](#)
22. [↑](#) [Friedrich Nietzsche](#), [On the Genealogy of Morals](#), Preface, aph. 3
23. [↑](#) [\[16\]](#)
24. [↑](#) [Satan's Way of Ruling Sure to Fail](#), [The Watchtower](#) (2010)
25. [↑](#) [\[17\]](#)
26. [↑](#) Alvin Plantinga, [Epistemic Probability and Evil](#)
27. [↑](#) [\[18\]](#)
28. [↑](#) [\[19\]](#)
29. [↑](#) [\[20\]](#)

External links

- [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#), [The Problem of Evil](#)
- [Hume and the Evidential Problem of Evil](#)
- [Dictionary.com entry for *sophistry*](#)
- [Quentin Smith](#), [A Sound Logical Argument of Evil](#)
- [DarkMatter2525](#), [How God Favors Evil](#), 27 Mar 2012

Who created God?

When theists ask "Who created the [universe](#)? It must have been [God](#)", asking "**Who created God?**" is a way of turning the original question back on itself. This is the most concise answer to the [first-cause](#) argument. This leads to an [infinite regress](#), known as [ad infinitum](#).

"The argument asks, essentially, why theists think that creation needs a Creator, but the Creator doesn't.^[1]"

"After all, what is the difference between arguing in favor of an eternally existing creator versus an eternally existing universe without one?^[2]"

Asking about God's creator is a way of drawing attention to the fact that inventing a god is not an [explanation](#) for the existence of the universe, or of unexplained features within the universe. On the contrary, it fails as an explanation because it does nothing more than push the question of origin up a level, and on this new level the same problem exists. Many theists also then use the [special pleading](#) fallacy to justify their beliefs.

In a more general way, this is a template for the technique of turning theistic questions about the world around on the God that they use to explain it. It can also be used as a response to arguments such as:

- The [natural-law argument](#) ("If the order of natural laws can only be explained by a creator, then what explains the order of the creator?")
- [Irreducible complexity](#) and the [argument from design](#) ("If complexity can only be explained by an [intelligent designer](#), then how do you explain the complexity of the designer?")
- [Morality](#), as in the [Euthyphro dilemma](#) ("If God is needed to tell us what is right and wrong, then on what basis does God decide what is right and wrong?")
- [Cosmological argument](#) ("If the universe had to have God as a cause, what caused God?")

Contents

1_Apologetic responses

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Apologetic responses

Special pleading

"God however is in a different category, and must be so. God is different from all nature and humanity and everything that exists, in that he has always existed, independent from anything he created. God is not a dependent being, but self-sufficient, self-existent.^[3]"

"But if something exists outside of time—like God—then it does not need an explanation for its beginning, because it does not have one.^[4]"

Another common theistic response is that God is [specially exempt](#) from the rules they (the apologists) have invented, because he exists "outside of time" or is "[necessarily existent](#)" and so is not subject to rules such as "everything requires a creator." (See also [Kalam](#).)

This argument is ultimately self-defeating. If there exist things which are not subject to the rules, then the rules are not really rules, but more like guidelines. If theists grant that some things do not need a creator, then we may as well simplify and say that it is the universe, or some other ungodlike entity, that requires no creator.

Of course, the theistic counter to this is that God is special. This is [begging the question](#), since it is the specialness of God that is what they are trying to prove.

Aquinas: God is not an entity

"Any decent freshman survey could have informed Hitchens that, as Aquinas and many others have patiently explained, God is not an entity and thus is not ensnared in any serial account of causality. Not a thing himself, God is rather the condition of there being anything at all. Thus, "creation" is not a gargantuan act of handicraft but rather the condition of there being something rather than nothing. Creation didn't happen long ago; it's right now, and forever.^[5]"

This is an unusual usage of the word "creation". It references [Why is there something rather than nothing?](#), [divine simplicity](#), [that's not my God](#) and the [argument from continued existence](#).

If God is really independent of causality, it is likely that his other attributes are so outside of human experience that he is unknowable. How does [Thomas Aquinas](#) know that God is not an entity (or not *id quod est*)?

While this type of God might be accepted by intellectual theists such as [Chris Hedges](#), most theists have a more anthropomorphic conception of God.

Unjustified claims

"Our universe cannot be explained any other way. It could not have created itself. It has not always existed."^[3]

The apologist asserts the universe cannot be necessarily existent, self creating or eternal, but they have no evidence to support this view. No one knows the details of the early [Big Bang](#) or what (if anything) came before. Although they try to deny it, they are making an [argument from ignorance](#).

God is uncaused

"So, to ask a silly question like, "Who caused the un-caused creator of the Universe" is a bit silly. He is uncaused by definition."^[6]

How does the apologist know that God is uncaused? Just defining God that way does not make it true.

The universe cannot be necessarily existent

"God, unlike the universe, is the sort of Necessary Cause that can be the ground of all being. "God created the universe and everything in it" is a coherent argument in a way that "the universe created the universe and everything in it" isn't."

It is a [straw man](#) to compare the first proposition to "the universe created the universe and everything in it", which is incoherent. It is better stated as: the universe necessarily exists. Saying that god is unique in being a "ground of all being" is [special pleading](#).

"God is infinite being, the Creator of time and space. It makes sense to say that He always existed (since He's necessarily infinite). But the universe isn't infinite being, it's bound by time and space, and it isn't true that the universe is necessarily infinite."




The apologist argues that since the universe is (seemingly) finite, it cannot be necessarily existent. This is an unjustified assertion. How does the apologist know that God is infinite (and exists) without [begging the question](#)?


Not an infinite regress

"It isn't coherent to argue that the universe was created by God, but God was in turn created by God to the second power, who was in turn created by God to the third power, and so on. As Aristotle cogently argued, there must be a reality that causes but is itself uncaused (or, a being that moves but is itself unmoved). Why? Because if there is an infinite regression of causes, then by definition the whole process could never begin."^[3]

This is only true based on one particular view of time ([presentism](#)). It is not necessarily true under [eternalism](#). The apologist still needs to establish their model of time is correct.

Scriptural claims

"God is everlasting in nature ([Isa. 40:28](#) ) , which is to say, he is eternal as to his very essence ([Rom. 16:26](#) ; [1 Tim. 1:17](#) ). His existence is "from everlasting to everlasting."^[7]

"Christianity answers the question of who made God in the very first verse of the very first book, Genesis: In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth ([Genesis 1:1](#) ^[8])"

Apologists have not shown any scriptures to be factually reliable.

Assuming scripture to be true is simply [begging the question](#).

See also

- [Not all events necessarily have causes](#)
- [Principle of sufficient reason](#)

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7. [↑](#) ^[6]
8. [↑](#) ^[7]

Turtles all the way down



Turtles all the way down!

This phrase comes from a famous story and is used to illustrate the absurdity of the [cosmological argument](#).

Origin of the Phrase

Although the story has circulated for a long time, the most famous retelling comes from the [Stephen Hawking](#) book [A Brief History of Time](#):

"A well-known scientist (some say it was [Bertrand Russell](#)) once gave a public lecture on astronomy. He described how the Earth orbits around the sun and how the sun, in turn, orbits around the centre of a vast collection of stars called our galaxy.

"At the end of the lecture, a little old lady at the back of the room got up and said: 'What you have told us is rubbish. The world is really a flat plate supported on the back of a giant turtle.'

"The scientist gave a superior smile before replying, 'What is the turtle standing on?'

"'You're very clever, young man, very clever,' said the old lady. 'But it's turtles all the way down.'"

This phrase is used by non-believers when debating the cosmological argument. Positing that [God](#) was the "[unmoved mover](#)", i.e. the first cause, of the universe raises the question of who created the creator, and on and on. In other words, it's turtles all the way down.

See Also

- [Who created God?](#)
- [Infinite regress](#)

External Links

- [Discworld:Great A'Tuin](#)

Problem of non-God objects

The **problem of non-God objects** asserts that if [God](#) is a maximally great being against which nothing could hope to compare, then God would never create any Non-God Objects.

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- [1.1_Earlier, similar arguments](#)

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Usage

This argument is aimed primarily at [Anselmian](#) conceptions of God or Perfect being Theology.

Proponents of [Perfect Being Theology](#) typically assert that properties

like [knowledge](#), [power](#), [love](#) etc. are properties contributing to greatness. So if a god exists and is a maximally great being, then it must have the maximum possible amount of these properties.

Christian philosopher [J.P. Moreland](#) writes,

"To say that God is perfect means that there is no possible world where he has his attributes to a greater degree... God is not the most loving being that happens to exist, he is the most loving being that could possibly exist so that God's possessing the attribute of being loving is to a degree such that it is impossible for him to have it to a greater degree."

Earlier, similar arguments

[Benedict de Spinoza](#) argued something similar in the appendix to Part 1 of his Ethics:

"Further, this doctrine does away with the perfection of God: for, if God acts for an object, he necessarily desires something which he lacks. Certainly, theologians and metaphysicians draw a distinction between the object of want and the object of assimilation; still they confess that God made all things for the sake of himself, not for the sake of creation. They are unable to point to anything prior to creation, except God himself, as an object for which God should act, and are therefore driven to admit (as they clearly must), that God lacked those things for whose attainment he created means, and further that he desired them."

The Basic Argument

Consider the concept of "GodWorld," a possible world in which God never actually creates anything. If we presume that that God exists, we can assume that GodWorld could exist, since the act of creating the universe (or any non-God object) was a choice that was not borne of necessity.

- **Proposition P1:** If the Christian God exists, then GodWorld is the unique best possible world.
- **Proposition P2:** If GodWorld is the unique best possible world, then the Christian God would maintain GodWorld.
- **Proposition P3:** GodWorld is false because the Universe (or any non-God object) exists.
- **Conclusion:** Therefore, the Christian God, as so defined, does not exist.

Justifying P1

If God exists, he is an ontologically perfect being - meaning he has those great-making properties to their maximal compossible degrees and no such properties to any lesser degree. A world comprised of only the maximally-great being for eternity would be a world comprised of all those great-making properties to their maximal compossible degrees and no such properties to any lesser degree.

Unless there is some source of unique Goodness - Goodness that exists outside of and fully independent of God, GodWorld must be the unique best possible world. GodWorld eternally sustains the highest overall ontological purity and, therefore, overall ontological quality to which no other world can compare, therefore it is the unique best possible world.

Justifying P2

An omniscient being would be aware of the fact that himself existing alone for eternity as GodWorld is the unique best possible world that could ever exist, and because God is essentially morally perfect, he couldn't have a motivating reason to intentionally alter the overall maximal purity and, therefore, the quality of the unique best possible world - because any alteration in overall purity by the introduction of a universe or any Non-God object, would, by necessity, be a degradation of overall purity and, therefore, overall quality. God wouldn't introduce limited entities each with their own unimpressive set of degraded great-making properties like the creation myth of Genesis records. While Adam and Eve clearly do have great-making properties (knowledge, power), they have them to an unimpressive degree and so introducing such beings would result in a degradation of overall ontological purity and, therefore, a degradation of overall ontological quality. To suggest God is in the degrading business is to suggest he wasn't maximally great in the first place.

Justifying P3

P3 is the easiest of the three to justify. It can be justified merely by a simple recognition that you, yourself, are not God.

Responses

External links [See the argument](#) presented verbally by Justin Schieber of [Reasonable Doubts](#) during a recent debate.

Argument from incompatible attributes

The **argument from incompatible attributes** is based on the description of God given in holy books and theology. Because God is described as having attributes that are incompatible or incoherent, that particular version of God cannot exist. Since there are many attributes that are applied to God, there are many forms of the argument.

This is a form of the [argument from the attributes of God](#).

Contents
1_Loving and Judging
2_Divine simplicity and complexity
3_Immutable
4_Omnipotence
5_Perfection
6_All benevolent and powerful God does not prevent evil
7_Omniscience
8_Omnipresent
9_Transcendent
10_Counter arguments
○ 10.1_You can't define God
11_References
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Loving and Judging

A God cannot treat people with both the severity they deserve (being just) and less severity than they deserve (being merciful). ^[1] [Friedrich Nietzsche](#) pointed out: ^[2]

"Whoever extolleth him as a God of love, doth not think highly enough of love itself. Did not that God want also to be judge? But the loving one loveth irrespective of reward and requital."

The [problem of Hell](#) points out that *infinite* punishment of Hell is never appropriate for *finite* transgressions. Therefore God cannot be just. If god as asserted to be immutable, he cannot be harmed by sin.

Divine simplicity and complexity

Main Article: [Divine simplicity](#)

Many attributes of God are based on the concept of divine simplicity. However if God is intelligent, he is complex. Divine simplicity has many other theological difficulties, particularly with the [Trinity](#) and the possibility of physical incarnation.

Immutable

God desired to create the universe before he created it, and after it was created he no longer desired to do so.

Therefore God is not immutable. ^[1]

God's personality varies in the Bible

A loving God must be affected by events, God is not affected by events (i.e. he is [impassible](#)), therefore he is not loving.

An immutable God cannot forgive sin, be affected by sin or answer prayers. Thomas Aquinas countered this by saying that prayer and its results coincides with God's great plan: ^[3]

"We pray not in order to change the divine disposition but for the sake of acquiring by petitionary prayer what God has disposed to be achieved by prayer"

The Biblical account of [God having emotions](#) at certain times is incompatible with immutability. God is "grieved" "at his heart" (Genesis 6:6). God is "grieved (Psalm 78:40), angry (Deuteronomy 1:37), pleased (1 Kings 3:10), joyful (Zephaniah 3:17), and moved by pity (Judges 2:18)." ^[4] Phillip R. Johnson defends divine impassibility by claiming these emotions are only metaphors (i.e. they are anthropopathic) and not to be taken literally. He exempts love, which God is still capable of, by [special pleading](#). If the metaphors of God's emotions correspond to anything in God, they are still temporal in nature, triggered by a particular situation and imply mutability.

Jesus notices a change in himself (presumably in the divine half of his nature) when a woman touches his clothes and is healed. Mark 5:30.

Omnipotence

Main Article: [Omnipotence paradox](#)

Omnipotence is not a coherent property because it must allow for God to limit his own powers. If he can't limit his own powers he is not omnipotent. This is usually expressed as "[can God create a rock so heavy that he can't lift it?](#)"

Perfection

If God is perfect, therefore God has no desires, therefore a perfect God would not create the Universe, therefore God does not exist. ^[1]

The [argument from poor design](#) points out that the universe is poorly designed, therefore the designer (God) cannot be perfect. For example, he regrets creating man in Genesis 6:5-7 ^[3].

All benevolent and powerful God does not prevent evil

Main Article: [Problem of evil](#)

David Hume restated Epicurus's famous argument of the [problem of evil](#):

"Why is there any misery at all in the world? Not by chance surely. From some cause then. Is it from the intention of the Deity? But he is perfectly benevolent. Is it contrary to his intention? But he is almighty. Nothing can shake the solidity of this reasoning, so short, so clear, so decisive; except we assert, that these subjects exceed all human capacity"

Omniscience

If the future is undecided (such as humans having [free will](#)), God cannot perfectly know the future. Therefore God is not omniscience.

Future events eventually become present and then past events. For God to know this, his understanding would change with time. ^[1]

Jesus appears to not know things and is sometimes surprised:

"And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? [...] And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. (Mark 5:30,32)"

- He asks "How many loaves have ye?" Mark 6:38. Mark 8:5 but this could have been rhetorical.

If God knows what he will do in the future, he is not free to change his mind. ^[1] Anyway, he can't change his mind since he is immutable. Such a being [cannot have free will](#) because their choices are predetermined.

Omnipresent

An omnipresent God cannot be a personal God. ^[1]

Transcendent

A transcendent God (i.e., outside space and time) cannot be omnipresent. ^[1]

A transcendent God cannot be a personal God. ^[1]

A non-physical God cannot be a personal God. ^[1]

Counter arguments

You can't define God

Main Article: [God can't be defined](#)

This is [Loki's wager](#): ^[4]

"This absolute immutability is one of God's transcendent characteristics, and we must resist the tendency to bring it in line with our finite human understanding."

References

1. ↑ [1.0](#) [1.1](#) [1.2](#) [1.3](#) [1.4](#) [1.5](#) [1.6](#) [1.7](#) [1.8](#) Theodore M. Drange, *Incompatible-Properties Arguments: A Survey*, Philo 1998 (2), pp. 49-60 [\[1\]](#)
2. ↑ Friedrich Nietzsche, Thus Spake Zarathustra
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See also

- [Incompatible-Properties Arguments: A Survey](#) A review of this argument.
- [Ignosticism](#)
- [Argument from inconsistent revelations](#), points out that believers have different interpretations of holy books.

External links

- DarkMatter2525, [God of the Paradox](#), 14 Nov 2011

▪ No-reason argument

▪ *This argument-related article is a [stub](#). You can help out by [expanding it](#).*

- It has been suggested that this article be merged with [Problem of non-God objects](#)
 - "The "**No Reason**" **argument** states that a perfect [god](#) would have no desire to create the [universe](#) since the very state of perfection carries with it the implication that one has everything one needs or wants. Thus, the Christian god is the "perfect" victim of this argument."
 - Drange formed the argument like this
 - 1. If God exists, then he is perfect.
 - 2. If God exists, then he is the creator of the universe.
 - 3. A perfect being can have no needs or wants.
 - 4. If any being created the universe, then he must have had some need or want.
 - 5. Therefore, it is impossible for a perfect being to be the creator of the universe (from 3 and 4).
 - 6. Hence, it is impossible for God to exist (from 1, 2, and 5).
 - **Apologetics**
-

▪ **Definitional Rebuttal**

- This argument is built on an inadequate human understanding of "perfection". As humans, we have no understanding of what it means to be perfect. We have ideas of what perfection ought to look like, but these are merely social constructs. To say that 'one who is perfect does not need' is an implication that cannot be argued for or against. Humans have no understanding of this notion; thus this is an argument built on insufficient premises.

▪ **Counter-Apologetics**

- The definitional rebuttal starts with an [atheistic](#) assumption to defend [theism](#). The assumption is that the origin of language was via humans and not [God](#). Many theists would state that God created language.
- If we cannot understand what perfection is and we assign that property to God, then how can we understand any other property of God. This would make positively inquiring about a god meaningless. If a god would want to be known he would need to instill a proper language with proper understanding in humans.
- It would be insanity if God said he was perfect without giving humans a proper understanding of perfection.

Santa Claus argument

The **Santa Claus argument** is a counter-apologetic that compares belief in God to belief in Santa Claus, the tooth fairy, or any other number of traditional superstitions commonly accepted as fiction. It is very similar to the "[we are all atheists about most gods](#)" argument.

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Background information

[Atheists](#) sometimes compare [belief](#) in [God](#) with belief in Santa Claus — both, they say, are childish beliefs that should be abandoned in adulthood, if not earlier. [Theists](#) usually reply that their God is far more subtle and sophisticated than a jolly red-dressed man flying around on a sled, so the beliefs aren't comparable. But aren't they?

Argument

Lack of evidence

Why do we reject the Santa Hypothesis? There are two key possible reasons. One might be that we caught our father filling the Christmas stockings, not Santa. A little reflection reveals that **all** of Santa's miracles — every stocking ever filled, every sled tracking by [NORAD](#), every old man in a red suit inviting a child to sit on his lap — all are lies and deceit.

It is this reasoning that the theists usually object to — their "Santa" is more subtle. He doesn't actually put money and candy in people's socks, you know. No, he only did that once, a long time ago — and you can't prove that he didn't, now can you?

Well no, but that does not make it true, or even plausible. The theists' stealthy, hidden Santa has been reduced to intervening only when no one is looking and can only be seen if you squint and look sideways (or perhaps just close your eyes and wish). This is absurd. The only kind of God left here with any intellectual honesty is that of the [Deist](#); positing a "hidden" god still lurking [in the cracks of our knowledge](#) is just too embarrassing. This God then, at least is left unharmed by the Santa argument. Right? Wrong.

Evidence to the contrary

There is a second reason why we reject the Santa Hypothesis. Long before we conduct [double-blind experiments](#) to monitor the filling of stockings, we would reject the hypothesis out of hand because it *doesn't fit into how we know the universe works*. In the real-world, jolly old men don't run hidden industrial toy-making complexes at the North Pole, they can't deliver presents to hundreds of millions of homes across the globe in one night, and reindeer don't fly.

The same can be said about God. We know something about intelligent agents: they require minds; and minds require brains — physical brains in physical heads, on physical bodies, forged by [evolution](#) through the ages. A non-physical mind that hasn't been subject to evolution and yet possesses superhuman intelligence and incontrovertible will — a personal, loving God that can hear silent prayers, understand our suffering, and know our every action and intent — all of this ignores everything we know about actual minds in the real world. The universe is simply not personal; it follows the laws of physics in a strictly impersonal manner. The universe doesn't revolve around us, nor does it care about our fate. Things just don't work that way. It's childish to believe otherwise.

Conclusion

Is it possible that Santa exists? Sure, it's *possible*. Perhaps one day intrepid reporting and careful scientific observation will demonstrate that something approximating the popular conception of Santa actually exists. Until that day, believing in Santa — even one hidden from our current understanding — is absurd. Similarly, believing that there is a God — even one hidden from our current understanding — is just as absurd. Adults should believe that existence works like science says it does: things that exist manifest in the physical world and can be discovered by scientific investigation. Flights of fancy that do not obey known laws of physics and biology should be left to children.

Theist objections to comparison

Some object to the comparison, claiming that the comparison fails. It's true that [all analogies fail at some point](#), however, it's typically for some non-relevant reason. For instance, a theist could object with:

"Santa was fat, and God is slim and muscular, so clearly your whole analogy falls apart!"

The fitness of Santa versus God is not relevant to the comparison, so the objection is irrelevant. As the purpose of the Santa analogy is to convey to theists why atheists don't believe, using something they don't believe either, in similar ways, to help bridge an understanding. The relevant points to the comparison are:

1. Both start off as beliefs that we accepted uncritically, because that's what we're told.
2. Both have similar mechanisms for maintaining faith and to avoid critical thinking.
3. Neither are supported by significant evidence

4. We end up realizing this fact, and start to doubt, and begin looking into it.
5. We end up concluding that accepting the claim as true is unfounded.

Pointing out that Santa Claus is a commercial venture, and Christianity is for helping the poor, for instance, is not particularly relevant to the comparison. For some reason, theists continue to accept the god, but let go of Santa Claus, and the comparison is to point out that doing so is unreasonable.

God is not material

"If unicorns, fairies and the flying spaghetti monster existed, they would be material beings existing inside the universe, and even here on Earth. We could technically search every square inch of the Earth and confirm that they do not exist. We could also measure their supposed effects like leaving money in exchange for teeth and watch if the money exchanged actually comes from the tooth fairy. When arguing that no one can disprove god, it is better to give a similar example that also cannot be disproven by anyone. ^[1]"

Apart from the questionable claim that the [Flying Spaghetti Monster](#) has to be physically manifested, most theists believe that God intervenes in the world (i.e. they are not [deists](#)), therefore God is possible to demonstrate, at least in principle. The fact that their God is not claimed to be non-material does not refute the argument because it is a [red herring](#).

If an alternative example is required for the comparison, [Russell's teapot](#) and [the Dragon In My Garage](#) are more suitable than a [brain in a vat](#).

References

1. [↑] [\[1\]](#)

External links

- [Why do atheists equate God with Santa Claus, the tooth fairy, elves](#) - Question and answer at www.asktheatheists.com Adapted from an original article [at the Atheism Wiki](#).

Can God create a rock so heavy that he can't lift it?

It has been suggested that this article be merged with [Omnipotence paradox](#)

The paradoxical question, "**Can God create a rock so heavy that he can't lift it?**" is a rather silly conundrum designed to show that the term *omnipotent* is actually meaningless.

Omnipotent means "all-powerful", which is typically understood to mean "able to do anything".

If [God](#) can do anything, then he should be able to create such a rock. But once the rock is created, he should also be able to lift it, which contradicts the first claim.

This is reminiscent of a story about a medieval arms salesman who boasted that his sword was so sharp that it could penetrate any armor, and his shield was so tough that it could withstand any attack. A member of the crowd called out, "What happens when you strike your sword against your own shield?" The salesman was stumped.

The answer is that the salesman was lying about one of his products. Or to put it another way, a perfect sword and a perfect shield cannot exist simultaneously. If there exists any sword that can penetrate all shields, then by definition there does not exist any shield that can withstand all attacks.

Similarly, there cannot exist a rock that cannot be lifted in a universe that also contains a God who can lift anything. Yet this proves that there is something that God cannot create.

How do we get out of the paradox? An [atheist](#) would answer that the very idea of being "all-powerful" is meaningless and not worthy of consideration in the real world. However, [apologists](#) often respond that "all-powerful" means "God can do everything... that is *logically possible*" (a common example given is that God can't create a square circle). This also is a limitation on God as if God is bound by logic, then he can't be the author of logic.

As [C.S. Lewis](#) states in *Mere Christianity*:

"His omnipotence includes power to do all that is intrinsically possible, not to do the intrinsically impossible. You may attribute miracles to Him, but not nonsense."

This raises the question of what exactly a [miracle](#) is, if not doing the impossible. Of course, the qualifier *intrinsically* is an important one. Still, this seems to paint a picture of God as simply the *most* powerful being in the universe, instead of an *all*-powerful one.

Also, God cannot *improve* himself since that would mean that he lacks a necessary attribute, although improvement is something which is logically possible to all human beings. Therefore, God is not omnipotent.

Of course a person of the Catholic faith might argue that this paradox can be resolved by the idea of the "Holy Trinity", in so much that the "Heavenly Father" could easily create a rock that Jesus, being human, could not lift. Since they believe the "Heavenly Father" and Jesus are one

and the same. However, this is fallacious as in such a context, "God" would refer to the entire trinity.

Outsider test

The **Outsider test** for faith (OTF) is a criterion for rational belief. [Religious](#) affiliation is largely determined by that of one's parents and native country. Believers are encouraged to test their beliefs by trying to see them from the perspective of someone outside the faith. Using this criterion, believers would be required to treat books such as the [Bible](#) with the same critical skepticism that they would apply to competing holy books, such as the [Koran](#) or the [Book of Mormon](#).

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Usage

The term "outsider test" was proposed by [John Loftus](#), a former [Christian apologist](#) turned [atheist](#).
Quotes from Loftus on the subject:

- "Test your beliefs as if you were an outsider to the faith you are evaluating."
- "The best way to test one's adopted religious faith is from the perspective of an outsider with the same level of skepticism used to evaluate other religious faiths."
- "Tell believers to examine their faith critically and most all of them will say they already do. But tell them to subject their own faith to the same level of skepticism they use when examining the other religious faiths they reject and that will get their attention."

Precursors

The outsider test codifies a form of argument that has existed in critiques of religion for some time.

[Thomas Jefferson](#) [in a letter to his nephew Peter Carr](#), offers some advice on how to study religion:

"In the first place, divest yourself of all bias in favor of novelty & singularity of opinion.... You will naturally examine first, the religion of your own country. Read the Bible, then as you would read Livy or Tacitus.... In fine, I repeat, you must lay aside all prejudice on both sides, and neither believe nor reject anything, because any other persons, or description of persons, have rejected or believed it. Your own reason is the only oracle given you by heaven, and you are answerable, not for the rightness, but uprightness of the decision."

[Robert Ingersoll](#) from his lecture "The Gods" (1872):

"All that is necessary, as it seems to me, to convince any reasonable person that the Bible is simply and purely of human invention -- of barbarian invention -- is to read it. Read it as you would any other book; think of it as you would of any other; get the bandage of reverence from your eyes; drive from your heart the phantom of fear; push from the throne of your brain the coiled form of superstition -- then read the Holy Bible, and you will be amazed that you ever, for one moment, supposed a being of infinite wisdom, goodness and purity, to be the author of such ignorance and of such atrocity."

In [Bertrand Russell](#)'s speech "[Am I An Atheist Or An Agnostic?](#)", Russell said that he could not prove there was no God, but could not disprove the existence of the Homeric gods either. More recently, [Richard Dawkins](#) argued "We are all [atheists](#) about most of the gods that humanity has ever believed in. Some of us just go one god further."

A similar slogan, coined by [Stephen Roberts](#) and used in many internet taglines, says, "I contend we are both atheists, I just believe in one fewer [god](#) than you do. When you understand why you dismiss all the other possible gods, you will understand why I dismiss yours."

The basic idea of the outsider test has also been applied to questions more specific than the existence of God. For example [Richard Carrier](#), in an [article](#) on [Jesus' resurrection](#), argued "Can you imagine a movement today claiming that a soldier in World War Two rose physically from the dead, but when you asked for proof all they offered you were a mere handful of anonymous religious tracts written in the 1980's? Would it be even remotely reasonable to believe such a thing on so feeble a proof? Well — no."

In his *Natural History of Religion*, [David Hume](#) gives a long discussion of how the beliefs of one religion may appear absurd to another, though he draws no explicit conclusions from this fact. Included in this discussion is an imagined exchange between a Catholic and a pagan:

"How can you worship leeks and onions? we shall suppose a SORBONNIST to say to a priest of SAIS. If we worship them, replies the latter; at least, we do not, at the same time, eat them. But what strange objects of adoration are cats and monkies? says the learned doctor. They are at least as good as the relics or rotten bones of martyrs, answers his no less learned antagonist. Are you not mad, insists the Catholic, to cut one another's throat about the preference of a cabbage or a cucumber? Yes, says the pagan; I allow it, if you will confess, that those are still madder, who fight about the preference among volumes of sophistry, ten thousand of which are not equal in value to one cabbage or cucumber."*

**This is a reference to the doctrine that in communion, the bread literally becomes the body of Jesus, whom Christians worship, putting them in the position of eating their god.*

Comparison with mental illness

"If you take a belief someone holds and you don't cloak it under the robe of religion, then this would be tantamount to the guy being schizophrenic and 'let's commit him to a mental hospital'. [For example,] this prophet has gone on a winged horse somewhere [e.g. heaven].^[1]"

See also

- [Argument from inconsistent revelations](#)
- [Argument from locality](#)
- [Skepticism](#)
- [Star Trek rule](#)

External links

- ["The Outsider Test"](#)
- ["Natural History of Religion"](#)

References

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- Loftus, John W. ed. *The Christian Delusion: Why Faith Fails* (Prometheus Books, 2010), ch. 4
- Loftus, John W. ed. *The End of Christianity* (Prometheus Books, 2011)

1. [↑] [\[1\]](#)

Biblical contradictions



For more information, see the [Skeptic's Annotated Bible](#) article:

[Contradictions in the Bible](#)



For more information, see the Atheist Debates video on [A primer on contradictions in scripture](#).

One counter-argument to the doctrine of the Bible's divine inspiration is to point out the many logical inconsistencies within the text. Examining contradictions is also a useful tool to argue against Biblical literalism and the belief that every word of the Bible is equally true. When the [Bible](#) can be shown to be in contradiction with itself, it casts doubt upon the idea that it is entirely true.

"Why are we even concerned about contradictions in scripture? Isn't that something we would expect? [...] Contradictions in scripture only matter if we are talking about a scenario where there's a perfect being, who is perfectly conveying a message that is intended to be understood by the reader. Is that the case? [...] not everyone who, for example, adheres to the Bible thinks that it is a perfect book or even that its supposed to be a perfect book. [...] The problem is when we say there is a God who is perfect, who was inspiring [the Bible]. If one portion of scripture contradicts another portion, it means that the scripture that we have is not trustworthy.^[1]"

It is often easier to argue based on [scientific](#) and [historic inaccuracies](#) in the Bible, rather than contradictions.

There are many different interpretations of the Bible. If God intended one interpretation to be transmitted to humans, [he seems to be a very poor communicator](#). Any reasonable deity would provide a clear way to avoid ambiguity and confusion. For this reason, we can conclude that there is no single correct interpretation (and that [Biblical literalism](#) is false) or that God is an incompetent communicator.

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Doctrinal contradictions



For more information, see the [Skeptic's Annotated Bible](#) article:

[How many gods are there?](#)

Potential doctrinal contradictions are potentially persuasive for Christians because they are part of their core belief system.

Salvation



For more information, see the [Skeptic's Annotated Bible](#) article:

[What the Bible says about salvation](#)

There are many contradictory instructions about what [salvation](#) requires and the significance of [atonement](#). Various Christian denominations have long argued over whether faith [Ephesians 2:8-9](#) 📖, works [2 Corinthians 5:10](#) 📖 or both [James 2:24](#) 📖 are required for salvation. One website lists 174 requirements for salvation, with many of them being contradictory. ^[2]

Apologists argue that many of these requirements are [not mutually exclusive](#) but can be taken together (all 174 of them). ^[3]

God's character

Main Article: [God's character changes in the Bible](#)



For more information, see the [Skeptic's Annotated Bible](#) article:

[Does God know and see everything?](#)



For more information, see the [Skeptic's Annotated Bible](#) article:

[Does God approve of slavery?](#)



For more information, see the [Skeptic's Annotated Bible](#) article:

[Does God love everyone?](#)

The [God](#) of the [Old Testament](#) seems to be very different from the God of the [New Testament](#). The Old Testament God is wrathful, bellicose and [ordered various atrocities](#), but the New Testament God promotes love and peace at least sometimes.

For example, God tells the Israelites, "Of the cities of these people which the Lord gives you as an inheritance, you shall let nothing that breathes remain alive." [Deuteronomy 20:16](#) 📖 God commands the complete destruction of thousands of people because they were sitting on Israel's promised land. Moreover, Joshua tells the Israelites that God, "is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm." [Joshua 24:19-20](#) 📖 This God is jealous and threatens punishment, even extreme curses [Deuteronomy 28:15](#) 📖, for those followers who disobey him. He also forces a pharaoh of Egypt to reject Moses' offering of peace, causing thousands of Egyptians to be ravaged by plagues and killed by an angel of death. [Exodus 4:21, 9:12](#) 📖

However, the God of the New Testament preaches peace. Jesus says, "But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." [Matthew 5:39](#) 📖 And he later says, "And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well." [Matthew 5:40](#) 📖. Clearly Jesus promotes peace over war in these passages. He is not threatening or jealous, but loving and full of mercy.

Clearly, these two testaments present a God with a conflicting character, or even two completely different gods altogether. Apologists argue the Bible presents a view of different aspects of the same unchanging God.

"[...] the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament are one and the same. God's character does not change. He is loving, faithful, long-suffering, merciful and just.^[4]"

An everlasting covenant



For more information, see the [Skeptic's Annotated Bible](#) article:

[Are we punished for the sins of others?](#)



For more information, see the [Skeptic's Annotated Bible](#) article:

[Is polygamy OK?](#)



For more information, see the [Skeptic's Annotated Bible](#) article:

[Has there ever been a righteous person?](#)

The [Old Testament](#) claims that the [Old Covenant](#) is everlasting [Genesis 17:13](#) 📖 and many of its laws are unchanging, but the [New Covenant](#) is introduced in the [New Testament](#) which abrogates some of the original laws [Gal 3:17](#) 📖 [Rom 4:9-12](#) 📖.^[5]

Apologists argue that the Old Covenant applies only to the Jews, while only [some parts of the Old Testament apply to Christians](#).^[6] [Jesus](#) says both to follow Old Testament law to the letter [Matthew 5:18](#) 📖, as well as to modify some parts of it [Mark 2:23](#) 📖 [Matthew 19:7-9](#) 📖. Apologists dance around this by claiming the "law was fulfilled" or Jesus kept the [true](#) laws.^[7]

Jesus



For more information, see the [Skeptic's Annotated Bible](#) article:

[Does Jesus judge people?](#)



For more information, see the [Skeptic's Annotated Bible](#) article:

[How much power did Jesus have?](#)

[Jesus](#) claimed he was only interested in reforming Judaism and therefore he was not interested in non-Jewish (gentile) believers, who he compared to "dogs". [Matthew 15:21-28](#) 📖 [Matthew 10:5-6](#) 📖. Later gospels say that he atoned for the sins of the whole world [1 John 2:2](#) 📖. Apologists claim that this refers to two different time periods.^[8]

Biblical events

There are many contradictions in Biblical events but are possibly less troubling to literalist Christians as they are easier to ignore. However, they do show [the Bible is not a reliable historical source](#).

Apologists sometimes argue that because the Bible contains [some historically verified facts, it must be generally trustworthy](#).

Creation Account



For more information, see the [Skeptic's Annotated Bible](#) article:

[The two contradictory creation accounts](#)

According to [Genesis 1:24-26](#) 📖, God creates the animals of the land, then creates man in his own image. There is a clear order here where God “made the wild animals according to their kinds...and God saw that it was good. Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our own image...so that they may rule...over all the creatures that move along the ground.’” God makes mankind in his own image, creating them male and female (v.27).

However, in [Genesis 2](#) 📖 God forms man out of dust, puts him in the Garden of Eden and says, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him” (v.18). The following verse says that “now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals,” which is ambiguous at face value in terms of whether these animals were created prior to Adam’s creation in concordance with chapter one, or if the animals were created in response to God’s recognition of Adam’s need. Regardless, as it turns out, no suitable helper was found for Adam amongst the animals (v. 20). “So the LORD God caused the man to fall asleep, and while he was sleeping he took one of the man’s ribs...then God made a woman from the rib” (v.21-22). Eve then becomes the “suitable helper” for Adam.

The obvious logical contradiction resides on when exactly, according the second account, the animals were created. It seems that the statement “but for Adam no suitable helper was found” suggests that the animals were created in order to meet Adam’s need for a companion, just as Eve was created after the animals failed to meet that need.

Perhaps a more nuanced contradiction resides in the roles of the animals which according to the first account are to be mere subjects to the man’s dominion, whereas in the second account they are possible candidates for companionship with Adam. Lastly there seems to be a sharp contradiction between God’s character in the two distinct accounts.

Apologists argue that Genesis 2 does not imply a chronological order for the creation of animals.^[9]

King Manasseh

According to [2 Chronicles](#), King [Manasseh](#) ruled for 55 years over Jerusalem. Both [2 Kings](#) and 2 Chronicles agree that Manasseh was an evil king who did wrong in the sight of God. However, the contradiction in his story lies in the fact in 2 Kings, Judah is destroyed because of Manasseh's sins which God did not pardon, while in 2 Chronicles, Manasseh asks the Lord for forgiveness and the Lord does grant him pardon.

"Surely at the commandment of the Lord this came upon Judah, to remove them from His sight because of the sins of Manasseh, according to all he had done, and also because of the innocent blood that he had shed...which the Lord would not pardon."

— [2 Kings 24: 3-4 NIV](#) 

In this quote we see that Judah is being attacked because of Manasseh's sins, and it is clear that the Lord did not pardon these sins. However, Chronicles tells a different story.

"Now when he [Manasseh] was in affliction, he implored the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed to Him; and he received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God."

— [2 Chronicles 33:12-13 NIV](#) 

Clearly there is a contradiction here. Either Manasseh asked for forgiveness and God granted it to him, or Manasseh was not pardoned for his sins. ^[10] Apologists argue that the accounts differ in emphasis but do not necessarily contradict each other:





"Apparently the author of 2 Kings did not record the repentance of Manasseh because of the lack of influence it had upon the steady decline of the nation."^[11]

Temple Cleansing



For more information, see the [Skeptic's Annotated Bible](#) article:

[***When did Jesus's temple tantrum occur?***](#)

In the [gospels](#), [Mark 11:15-19](#) , [Matthew 21:12-17](#)  and [Luke 19:45-48](#) , Jesus, during the Passover, goes to the temple and clears out the merchants in the temple courtyard. This occurs at towards the end of his ministry, closer to the time of his death. However, in [John 2:13-22](#) , Jesus does this "temple

cleansing" at the beginning of his ministry. There is an obvious contradiction here regarding the time of this particular event.

[John Calvin](#) attempted to harmonize these contradictory accounts by claiming that these accounts demonstrate that there were in fact, two separate occasions where Jesus drove out the merchants. However, this view is inadequate to explain how the accounts are almost identical with similar details. Furthermore, most biblical scholars agree to the fact that certain gospel writers were aware of and most likely read previously written bibles. It is highly likely therefore, that one of the gospels should have both accounts if Calvin's claim is true, but this is not the case.

"In this case, the solution is actually quite simple. Jesus cleansed the temple on at least two occasions.^[12]"

Death of Judas



For more information, see the [Skeptic's Annotated Bible](#) article:

[How did Judas die?](#)



For more information, see the [Skeptic's Annotated Bible](#) article:

[Who bought the potter's field?](#)



For more information, see the [Skeptic's Annotated Bible](#) article:

[What did Judas do with the silver?](#)

The Bible records two different deaths for [Judas](#): [Acts 1:18](#) 📖 and [Matthew 27:5](#) 📖 as well as contradictions in the surrounding events. This example was cited by [C.S. Lewis](#) when he claimed that not every statement in Scripture is historical truth.

Apologists argue that both accounts are true and no contradiction exists. ^[13] However, it is hard to believe that Judas could have burst open after falling from where he hung himself, not to mention accepting the other differences between the accounts can be reconciled in this way.

Counter arguments

The Bible should not be read literally

"The Bible, which [the new atheists] are so fond of attaching a incoherent, was never designed to be a coherent book. [...] In ancient libraries it was not a unified whole but a collection of scrolls places in cubbyholes. These scrolls, all read separately, contain wisdom literature, moral treatise, stories, rules, aphorisms, creation myths, letters, fables, polemics, histories and poems.^[14]"

Scribal, translation errors

Contradictions could have been introduced by copiests or translators of scripture but the originals were supposedly perfect.

"If God is perfect, and if the Bible is the Word of God (which it claims to be, as the previous sections demonstrate), then it follows that, in its original form as it initially came from God, the Bible must be perfect.^[15]"

The problem is the original form is not accessible now, so all available copies are imperfect.

Interpretation errors

Some supposed contradictions are potentially errors in interpretation. Particular idioms, nuance or terminology are different from what a modern reader might assume. The context and style of a passage can be significant in its interpretation.

Skeptics would do well to fully understand alleged contradictions and their potentially counter-arguments, rather than to simply quote them with no understanding of the underlying issues. Some theists are very knowledgeable about scripture and may have a legitimate explanation for an apparent contradiction.

See also

- [Bible](#)
- [Biblical inerrancy](#)
- [Biblical genealogies](#)
- [Argument from scriptural inerrancy](#)
- [Failed prophecy in the Bible](#)
- [Death of Judas](#)

References

1. [↑ \[1\]](#)
2. [↑ \[2\]](#)
3. [↑ \[3\]](#)
4. [↑ \[4\]](#)
5. [↑ \[5\]](#)
6. [↑ \[6\]](#)
7. [↑ \[7\]](#)
8. [↑ \[8\]](#)
9. [↑ \[9\]](#)
10. [↑](#) *God's Word in Human Words*, p. 104,
by Kenton Sparks
11. [↑ \[10\]](#)
12. [↑ \[11\]](#)
13. [↑ \[12\]](#)
14. [↑](#) [Chris Hedges](#), [I Don't Believe in Atheists](#), 2008
15. [↑ \[13\]](#)

External links

- [A List of Biblical Contradictions](#), by Jim Merritt. Library, [Infidels.org](#)
- [Biblical Contradictions](#), [American Atheists](#) website.
- [Bible Inconsistencies: Bible Contradictions?](#), by Donald Morgan. Library, [Infidels.org](#)
- [Contradictions in the Bible](#), [Skeptic's Annotated Bible](#) website.
- [Internal consistency of the Bible](#), Wikipedia
- [Biblical Contradictions](#), [Evil Bible](#)
- [\[14\]](#)
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- [\[16\]](#)
- [\[17\]](#)
- [\[18\]](#)

Problem of evil (evidential)

The **evidential** version of the **problem of evil** (also referred to as the probabilistic or inductive version), seeks to show that the existence of evil, although logically consistent with the existence of God, counts against or lowers the [probability](#) of the truth of theism. As an example, a critic of [Plantinga](#)'s idea of "a mighty nonhuman spirit" causing natural evils may concede that the existence of such a being is not logically impossible but argue that due to lacking scientific evidence for its existence this is very unlikely and thus it is an unconvincing explanation for the presence of natural evils.

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Variations

A version by William L. Rowe:

1. There exist instances of intense suffering which an omnipotent, omniscient being could have prevented without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse.
2. An omniscient, wholly good being would prevent the occurrence of any intense suffering it could, unless it could not do so without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse.
3. (Therefore) There does not exist an omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good being.

Another by [Paul Draper \(philosopher\)](#):

1. Gratuitous evils exist.
2. The hypothesis of indifference, *i.e.*, that if there are supernatural beings they are indifferent to gratuitous evils, is a better explanation for (1) than theism.
3. Therefore, evidence prefers that no god, as commonly understood by theists, exists.

These arguments are probability judgments since they rest on the claim that, even after careful reflection, one can see no good reason for God's permission of evil. The inference from this claim to the general statement that there exists unnecessary evil is inductive reasoning|inductive in nature and it is this inductive step that sets the evidential argument apart from the logical argument.

The logical possibility of hidden or unknown reasons for the existence of evil still exist. However, the existence of God is viewed as any large-scale hypothesis or explanatory theory that aims to make sense of some pertinent facts. The extent to which it fails to do so has not been confirmed. According to [Occam's razor](#), one should make as few assumptions as possible. Hidden reasons are assumptions, as is the assumption that all pertinent facts can be observed, or that facts and theories humans have not discerned are indeed hidden. Thus, as per Draper's argument above, the theory that there is an omniscient and omnipotent being who is indifferent requires no hidden reasons in order to explain evil. It is thus a simpler theory than one that also requires hidden reasons regarding evil in order to include omnibenevolence. Similarly, for every hidden argument that completely or partially justifies observed evils it is equally likely that there is a hidden argument that actually makes the observed evils worse than they appear without hidden arguments. As such, from a probabilistic viewpoint hidden arguments will neutralize one another.

Author and researcher Gregory S. Paul offers what he considers to be a particularly strong [problem of evil](#). Paul describes conservative calculations that at least 100 billion people have been born throughout human history (starting roughly 50 000 years ago, when Homo Sapiens—humans—first appeared). He then performed what he calls "simple" calculations to estimate the historical death rate of children throughout this time. He found that the historical death rate was over 50%, and that the deaths of these children were mostly due to diseases (like malaria).

Paul thus sees it as a [problem of evil](#), because this means, throughout human history, over 50 billion people died naturally before they were old enough to give mature consent. He adds that as many as 300 billion humans may never have reached birth, instead dying naturally but prenatally (the prenatal death rate being about 3/4 historically). Paul says that these figures could have implications for calculating the population of a heaven (which could include the aforementioned 50 billion children, 50 billion adults, and roughly 300 billion fetuses—excluding any living today).

A common response to instances of the evidential problem is that there are plausible (and not hidden) justifications for God's permission of evil. These are discussed below.

Related arguments

Doctrines of [hell](#), particularly those involving [eternal](#) suffering, pose a particularly strong form of the [problem of evil](#) (see [problem of hell](#)). If unbelief, incorrect beliefs, or poor design are considered evils, then the [argument from nonbelief](#), the [argument from inconsistent revelations](#), and the [argument from poor design](#) may be seen as particular instances of the argument from evil.

Responses: defenses and theodicies

Responses to the problem of evil have sometimes been classified as *defenses* or *theodicies*. However, authors disagree on the exact definitions. John Hick, for example, proposes a theodicy, while [Alvin Plantinga](#) formulates a defense. The idea of human free will often appears in both of these strategies, but in different ways. Generally, a *defense* may refer to attempts to defuse the logical problem of evil by showing that there is no logical incompatibility between the existence of evil and the existence of God. This task does not require the identification of a plausible explanation of evil, and is successful if the explanation provided shows that the existence of God and the existence of evil are logically compatible. It need not even be true, since a false though coherent explanation would be sufficient to show logical compatibility.

A *theodicy* (may refer to the project of "justifying God" – showing that God's existence is compatible with the existence of evil) on the other hand, is more ambitious, since it attempts to provide a plausible justification—a morally sufficient reason—for the existence of evil and thereby rebut the "evidential" argument from evil. Richard Swinburne maintains that it does not make sense to assume there are greater goods that justify the evil's presence in the world unless we know what they are—without knowledge of what the greater goods could be, one cannot have a successful theodicy. Thus, some authors see arguments appealing to demons or the fall of man as indeed logically possible, but not very *plausible* given our knowledge about the world, and so see those arguments as providing defenses but not good theodicies.

Denial of omniscience, omnipotence, omnibenevolence

If God lacks any one of these qualities, the existence of evil is explicable, and so the problem of evil will not be encountered.

In polytheism the individual deities are usually not omnipotent or omnibenevolent. However, if one of the deities has these properties the problem of evil applies. Belief systems where several deities are omnipotent would lead to logical contradictions.

Greater good responses

The [omnipotence paradoxes](#) raise questions as to the nature of God's omnipotence, with some solutions proposing that omnipotence does not require the ability to actualize the logically impossible. Greater good responses to the problem make use of this insight by arguing for existence of goods of great value which God cannot actualize without also permitting evil, and thus that there are evils he cannot be expected to prevent despite being omnipotent. The most popular greater good response appeals to free will.

Free will

The [free will](#) response asserts that the existence of free beings is something of tremendous value, because with free will comes the ability to make morally significant choices (and, it may be added, to enter into authentic loving relationships. Christian pastor and theologian, Gregory A. Boyd claims that God's all-powerful nature does not mean that God

exercises all power, and instead allows free agents to act against his own wishes. He argues that since love must be chosen, love cannot exist without true free will. He also maintains that God does not plan or will evil in people's lives, but that evil is a result of a combination of free choices and the interconnectedness and complexity of life in a sinful and fallen world. With it also comes the potential for abuse, as when we fail to act morally. But the disvalue created by such abuse of free will is easily outweighed by the great value of free will and the good that comes of it, and so God is justified in creating a world which offers free will existence, and with it the potential for evil, over a world with neither free beings nor evil. A world with free beings and no evil would be still better, however this would require the cooperation of free beings with God, as it is logically impossible for God to prevent abuses of freedom without thereby curtailing that freedom.

Critics of the free will response have questioned whether it accounts for the degree of evil seen in this world. One point in this regard is that while the value of free will may be thought sufficient to counterbalance minor evils, it is less obvious that it outweighs the disvalue of evils such as rape and murder. Particularly egregious cases known as horrendous evils, which "constitute prima facie reason to doubt whether the participant's life could (given their inclusion in it) be a great good to him/her on the whole", have been the focus of recent work in the problem of evil. Another point is that those actions of free beings which bring about evil very often diminish the freedom of those who suffer the evil - for example, the murder of a young child (e.g. Death of Baby P) may prevent the child from ever exercising their free will in a significant way. Given that in such a case pits the freedom of an innocent child against the freedom of the evil-doer, it is not clear why God would not intervene for the sake of the child.

A second criticism is that the potential for evil inherent in free will may be limited by means which do not impinge on that free will. God could accomplish this by making moral actions especially pleasurable, so that they would be irresistible to us; he could also punish immoral actions immediately, and make it obvious that moral rectitude is in our self-interest; or he could allow bad moral decisions to be made, but intervene to prevent the harmful consequences from actually happening. A reply is that such a "toy world" would mean that free will has less or no real value. C. S. Lewis writes: "We can, perhaps, conceive of a world in which God corrected the results of this abuse of free will by His creatures at every moment: so that a wooden beam became soft as grass when it was used as a weapon, and the air refused to obey me if I attempted to set up in it the sound waves that carry lies or insults. But such a world would be one in which wrong actions were impossible, and in which, therefore, freedom of the will would be void; nay, if the principle were carried out to its logical conclusion, evil thoughts would be impossible, for the cerebral matter which we use in thinking would refuse its task when we attempted to frame them." Critics may respond that this view seems to imply it would be similarly wrong for humans to try to reduce suffering in these ways, a position which few would advocate. The debate depends on the definitions of free will and determinism, which are deeply disputed concepts themselves, as well as their relation to one another.

A third reply is that though the free will defense has the potential to explain **moral evil**, as described it fails to address **natural evils**, such as earthquakes, hurricanes and diseases. Advocates of the free will response may advert to a different explanation of these natural evils, or extend the free will response to account for them. As an example of the latter, Alvin Plantinga has famously suggested that natural evils are caused by the free choices of supernatural beings such as demons. Others have argued that natural evils are the result of the fall of man, which corrupted the perfect

world created by God; or that natural laws which are prerequisite for the existence of intelligent free beings, or again that natural evils provide us with a knowledge of evil which makes our free choices more significant than they would otherwise be, and so our free will more valuable. Richard Swinburne in "Is There a God?" writes that "the operation of natural laws producing evils gives humans knowledge (if they choose to seek it) of how to bring about such evils themselves. Observing you can catch some disease by the operation of natural processes gives me the power either to use those processes to give that disease to other people, or through negligence to allow others to catch it, or to take measures to prevent others from catching the disease." In this way, "it increases the range of significant choice....The actions which natural evil makes possible are ones which allow us to perform at our best and interact with our fellows at the deepest level" Lastly, it has been suggested that natural evils are a mechanism of divine punishment for evils that humans have committed, and so the evil is justified.

Finally, because the free will response assumes a libertarian account of free will, the debate over its adequacy naturally widens into a debate concerning the nature and existence of free will. Compatibilists deny that a being who is determined to act morally lacks free will, and so also that God cannot ensure the moral behavior of the free beings he creates. Hard determinists deny the existence of free will, and therefore that the existence of free will justifies the evil in our world. There is also debate regarding the compatibility of libertarian free will with the absence of evil from heaven.

Soul-making or Irenaean theodicy

Distinctive of the soul-making theodicy is the claim that evil and suffering are necessary for spiritual growth. This theodicy was developed by the second-century Christian theologian, Irenaeus of Lyons, and its most recent and outspoken advocate has been the influential philosopher of religion, John Hick. A perceived inadequacy with the theodicy is that many evils do not seem to promote such growth, and can be positively destructive of the human spirit. A second issue concerns the distribution of evils suffered: were it true that God permitted evil in order to facilitate spiritual growth, then we would expect evil to disproportionately befall those in poor spiritual health. This does not seem to be the case, as the decadent enjoy lives of luxury which insulate them from evil, whereas many of the pious are poor, and are well acquainted with worldly evils. A third problem attending this theodicy is that the qualities developed through experience with evil seem to be useful precisely because they are useful in overcoming evil. But if there were no evil, then there would seem to be no value in such qualities, and consequently no need for God to permit evil in the first place. Against this it may be asserted that the qualities developed are intrinsically valuable, but this view would need further justification.

Skeptical theism

Skeptical theists argue that due to humanity's limited knowledge, we cannot expect to understand God or his ultimate plan. When a parent takes an infant to the doctor for a regular vaccination to prevent childhood disease, it's because the parent cares for and loves that child. The infant however will be unable to appreciate this. It is argued that just as an infant cannot possibly understand the motives of its parent due to its cognitive limitations, so too are humans unable to comprehend God's will in their current physical and earthly state. Given this view, the difficulty or impossibility of finding a plausible explanation for evil in a world created by God is to be expected, and so the argument from evil is assumed to fail unless it can be proven that God's reasons would be comprehensible to us. A related response is that good and evil are strictly beyond human comprehension. Since our concepts of good and evil as instilled in us by God are only

intended to facilitate ethical behavior in our relations with other humans, we should have no expectation that our concepts are accurate beyond what is needed to fulfill this function, and therefore cannot presume that they are sufficient to determine whether what we call evil really is evil. Such a view may be independently attractive to the theist, as it permits an agreeable interpretation of certain biblical passages, such as "...Who makes peace and creates evil; I am the Lord, Who makes all these."

A counterpoint to the above is that while these considerations harmonize belief in God with our inability to identify his reasons for permitting evil, there remains a question as to why we have not been given a clear and unambiguous assurance by God that he has good reasons for allowing evil, which would be within our ability to understand. Here discussion of the problem of evil shades into discussion of the [argument from nonbelief](#).

Eric Wielenberg has argued that the theist who adopts Skeptical Theism as a response to the evidential problem of evil must, as a matter of consistency, admit that he is also in no position to place probabilities on the truth value of any proposition that has biblical Justification only. This is because the theist isn't in a position to place probabilities on whether or not God has a 'beyond our understanding' justification for lying to them in any proposition that has biblical justification only.

Denial of the existence of evil

Evil as the absence of good



6th century portrait of Augustine of Hippo

The fifth century theologian [Augustine of Hippo](#) maintained that evil exists only as a privation or absence of the good. Ignorance is an evil, but is merely the absence of knowledge, which is good; disease is the absence of health; callousness an absence of compassion. Since evil has no positive reality of its own, it cannot be caused to exist, and so God cannot be held responsible for causing it to exist. In its strongest form, this view may identify evil as an absence of God, who is the sole source of that which is good.

A related view, which draws on the [Taoist](#) concept of yin-yang, allows that both evil and good have positive reality, but maintains that they are complementary opposites, where the existence of each is dependent on the existence of the other. Compassion, a valuable virtue, can only exist if there is suffering; bravery only exists if we sometimes face danger; self-sacrifice is called for only where others are in need. This is sometimes called the "contrast" argument.

Perhaps the most important criticism of this view is that, even granting its success against the argument from evil, it does nothing to undermine an 'argument from the absence of goodness' which may be pushed instead, and so the response is only superficially successful.

Evil as illusory

It is possible to hold that evils such as suffering and disease are mere illusions, and that we are mistaken about the existence of evil. This approach is favored by some Eastern religious philosophies such as Hinduism and Buddhism, and by Christian Science. It is most plausible when considering our knowledge of evils which are geographically or temporally distant, for these might not be real after all. However, when considering our own sensations of pain and mental anguish, there does not seem to be a difference in apprehending that we are afflicted by such sensations and suffering under their influence. If that is the case, it seems that not all evils can be dismissed as illusory.

Turning the tables

"Evil" suggests an ethical law

A different approach to the problem of evil is to turn the tables by suggesting that any argument from evil is self-refuting, in that its conclusion would necessitate the falsity of one of its premises. One response then is to point out that the assertion "evil exists" implies an ethical standard against which moral value is determined, and then to argue that this standard implies the existence of God (see [argument from morality](#)). C. S. Lewis writes:

{{quote|My argument against God was that the universe seemed so cruel and unjust. But how had I got this idea of just and unjust? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust?... Of course I could have given up my idea of justice by saying it was nothing but a private idea of my own. But if I did that, then my argument against God collapsed too—for the argument depended on saying the world was really unjust, not simply that it did not happen to please my fancies.

The standard criticism of this view is that an argument from evil is not necessarily a presentation of the views of its proponent, but is instead intended to show how premises which the theist is inclined to believe lead him or her to the conclusion that God does not exist (i.e. as a [reductio](#) of the theist's worldview). Another tact is to reformulate the argument from evil so that this criticism does not apply—for example, by replacing the term "evil" with "suffering", or what is more cumbersome, state of affairs that orthodox theists would agree are properly called "evil".

General criticisms of defenses and theodicies

Several philosophers have argued that just as there exists a problem of evil for theists who believe in an omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent being, so too is there a problem of good for anyone who believes in an omniscient, omnipotent, and omnimalevolent (or perfectly evil) being. As it appears that the defenses and theodicies which might allow the theist to resist the problem of evil can be inverted and used to defend belief in the omnimalevolent being, this suggests that we should draw similar conclusions about the success of these defensive strategies. In that case, the

theist appears to face a dilemma: either to accept that both sets of responses are equally bad, and so that the theist does not have an adequate response to the problem of evil; or to accept that both sets of responses are equally good, and so to commit to the existence of an omnipotent, omniscient, and omnimalevolent being as plausible. Critics have noted that theodicies and defenses are often addressed to the logical problem of evil. As such, they are intended only to demonstrate that it is *possible* that evil can co-exist with an omniscient, omnipotent and omnibenevolent being. Since the relevant parallel commitment is only that good can co-exist with an omniscient, omnipotent and omnimalevolent being, not that it is plausible that they should do so, the theist who is responding to the problem of evil need not be committing themselves to something they are likely to think is false. This reply, however, leaves the evidential problem of evil untouched.

Another general criticism is that though a theodicy may harmonize God with the existence of evil, it does so at the cost of nullifying morality. This is because most theodicies assume that whatever evil there is exists because it is required for the sake of some greater good. But if an evil is necessary because it secures a greater good, then it appears we humans have no duty to prevent it, for in doing so we would also prevent the greater good for which the evil is required. Even worse, it seems that any action can be rationalized, as if one succeeds in performing it, then God has permitted it, and so it must be for the greater good. From this line of thought one may conclude that, as these conclusions violate our basic moral intuitions, no greater good theodicy is true, and God does not exist. Alternatively, one may point out that greater good theodicies lead us to see every conceivable state of affairs as compatible with the existence of God, and in that case the notion of God's goodness is rendered meaningless.

See also

- [Problem of evil](#)

External links

- [The Evidential Argument from Evil - Nicholas Tattersall \(1998\)](#)
- [More Articles on the Evidential Argument from Evil - The Secular Web](#)

Argument from the inefficacy of prayer



"Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."

Because [prayer](#) is ineffective, skeptics argue that a God who answers prayers cannot exist. This rules out the existence of the [Abrahamic god](#) of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. A related argument is that God cannot answer prayers because of his nature or attributes and such a God cannot exist.

"We pray sincerely, knowing that when God answers this completely heartfelt, unselfish, non-materialistic prayer, it will glorify God and help millions of people in remarkable ways. Will anything happen? No. Of course not. [\[1\]](#)"

Believers sometimes argue the reverse point: [prayer is answered and therefore God exists](#).

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Argument

- If he exists, God answers [intercessory prayers](#) [Mark 11:24](#) 
- People pray [intercessory prayers](#)
- Those prayers are not answered or if they are occasionally fulfilled, the outcome is adequately explained by naturalistic causes
- Therefore, such a God does not exist

Counter arguments

Apologists attempt to explain why some prayers are apparently answered using a variety of arguments.

Unanswered prayer may serve God's purposes

Another common rationalization is that God uses unanswered prayers to demonstrate his power through the suffering person's life. For example, a patient with terminal cancer whose faith is deepened because of their ordeal. This raises the question, however, of why an all-knowing and all-loving God couldn't think of a less painful way to accomplish that particular goal. It also raises the question of why a person who already had faith has to endure more pain to have it "deepened".

This may explain why God does not intervene in a particular case but does not explain why he never heals amputees.

God does not have to fix your mistakes

A less common rationalization is that a person who gets their leg shot off in a way chose to be on that battlefield of their own [free will](#) and, thus, God has no obligation to heal them. However, this ignores the millions born or with missing limbs or caused by accidents that were never healed.

Answered in the afterlife

Some Christians say that Jesus never specified when he would answer prayers and that maybe he will answer them in the afterlife. This is unfair since God apparently answers so many other prayers during the believers' lifetimes. Also, the verses quoted above are unambiguous in the fact that they state that whatever you ask for you'll get during your life.

God should not be put to the test

Others say that God can't be tested since he's so much higher than us. This ignores the story of Gideon in the Old Testament and Thomas in the New Testament who both did exactly that and who received the proof that each had asked for.

As Sagans essay [The Dragon In My Garage](#) points out, an untestable God is undistinguishable from a non-existent God.

The verses should be not interpreted literally

Some might bring up the objection that these verses aren't to be taken literally. Firstly, the verses themselves are certainly written like they should be taken literally. Secondly, if this objection is used the believer must provide an objective reason why these verses are non-literal. If no reason can be provided, this claim is [special pleading](#) and the verses should continue to be taken literally.

You are not a true believer

[Matthew 21:21](#) 📖 says that you must have faith and not doubt for your prayers to be answered. This offers a convenient loophole for unanswered prayers. If you pray and you satisfy every single stipulation and yet your prayer is never answered, Christians can always fall back on saying "You didn't believe enough" or "You doubted your faith". Since there is no empirical way to define how much belief is "enough", this becomes an [ad hoc](#) explanation which makes prayer [unfalsifiable](#). It also undermines the fact that some theists will claim that they themselves or people they know of have become believers after being prayed for and where the result was some miraculous event. It is also an example of the [No true Scotsman fallacy](#).

An extension of this argument is that [all believers have drifted away from God and he feels under no obligation to respond to prayers](#).

Prayer and miracles works differently now than in the past

While miracles are common in certain parts of the Bible, they are seemingly uncommon or manifest differently in the modern age. ^[2] This is presumed to be part of God's plan. However, no evidence supports this argument and is a form of *ad hoc* [special pleading](#).

God enables faith by withholding proof

Christians might also say that God doesn't want to provide unambiguous proof of his own existence [since this would deny faith](#). However, this rationalization ignores the myriad of times in the Bible that he does just that.

God does not exist

The conclusion drawn by skeptics is that God does not exist.

References

1. [↑](#) God is imaginary, [Proof #1 - Try praying](#)
2. [↑](#) ^[1]

See also

- [Argument from the efficacy of prayer](#)
- [Modern Christianity does not fulfill biblical signs](#)

External links

- [Why Won't God Heal Amputees?](#)

- [Proof #44 - Think about a Christian housewife](#) from GodIsImaginary.com: "*Take one moment to think about a typical Christian and her "answered prayers."*"
- [Prayer on An Encyclopedia of Claims, Frauds, and Hoaxes of the Occult and Supernatural](#) (By [James Randi](#))

Occam's Razor

Occam's Razor (or **Ockham's Razor**) is the philosophical principle which states: *entities should not be multiplied beyond necessity*. It has been paraphrased in various forms:

"All things being equal, the simplest solution tends to be the best one."

"Out of several equally good explanations, pick the simplest one."

"We are to admit no more causes of natural things than such as are both true and sufficient to explain their appearances. Therefore, to the same natural effects we must, so far as possible, assign the same causes"

— [Isaac Newton](#)

"Whenever possible, substitute constructions out of known entities for inferences to unknown entities"

— [Bertrand Russell](#)

In this context, the word "simplest" means "the explanation that contains the fewest assumptions." Similarly, "equally good" refers to the ability of the explanation to account for the observation and not to the veracity of the explanation. Occam's Razor is one of the key principles of skepticism.

Occam's Razor has perhaps less application to religion than is commonly assumed because religion is often not a predictive explanation. Therefore, any other predictive theory which is even remotely correct is considered better than a non-predictive religious explanation. Occam's Razor does apply in cases where God is needlessly invoked, such as with [theistic evolution](#).

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Expression using logic

A narrow interpretation of Occam's razor may be expressed as logically as:

"A and (B or not B)" is simply A

This was summarised by [Ludwig Wittgenstein](#) as:

"If a sign is not necessary then it is meaningless. That is the meaning of Occam's Razor."

Example

Assume a child contracts a nasty disease which leaves her in terrible pain. She is taken to the doctor and is given medicine. Meanwhile, the parents pray to [God](#) for her safe recovery. A few days later she is perfectly healthy again and the parents, in their happiness, proclaim "God saved our child!"

A better explanation for the child's recovery, however, would be that the medicine the doctors gave her did its job. When one compares the two explanations ("God did it" and "The medicine worked") it is clear that the second requires fewer assumptions. God isn't required for the medicine to have worked in the second explanation, therefore it is the one that should be chosen.

Extending the Razor

Consider any observation which requires a causal explanation; a rainbow, for example. We can devise numerous explanations for this phenomenon:

1. [Yahweh](#) creates them as a reminder of his promise to never again flood the entire earth
2. Light dispersion due to refraction as it passes through water droplets
3. Sky pixies sprinkle colored dust in the sky
4. [Leprechauns](#) create them to mark pots of gold

Each of these explanations answers the question and they all also prompt additional questions, but only the second answer explains the phenomena in terms which we adequately understand. The additional questions raised by the second explanation (dispersion, refraction, visible spectrum, etc.) are simpler concepts supported by consistent, reliable definitions. Further the way light is defracted is well understood by scientists and supported by experimental evidence. (Incidentally even if Yahweh used scientific defraction to remind us of his promise this leaves unanswered why light was not defracted before the flood and how all the other problems with the story of [Noah's ark](#) can be answered.)

Each of the other explanations could be considered equivalent

non-answers. The causal subjects are complex constructs which prompt many additional, unanswered questions about the nature of those subjects and how they managed to create the rainbow. The fact that these explanations are non-answers can be made more clear by substituting the subjects into different answer:

- Yahweh creates them to mark pots of gold
- Leprechauns sprinkle colored dust in the sky
- Sky pixies create them as a reminder of their promise to never again flood the entire earth

To understand why Occam's Razor is a strong-atheistic argument, we must first understand what Occam's Razor implies, and what its consequences are.

Occam's Razor is a method to choose between hypotheses which explain the same facts. We can express it simply as: the hypothesis we must choose is the simplest. More rigorously, we can express it as such:

- Posit two hypotheses A and B, both explaining the same set of facts S.
- The set of explanatory entities and processes of hypothesis A is called Ea.
- The set of explanatory entities and processes of hypothesis B is called Eb.
- The intersection of A and B's explanatory entities and processes is called I.
- If neither $Ea - I$ nor $Eb - I$ equals zero, the hypothesis with the smallest number of superfluous entities and processes is probably the valid one. We do not have a sufficiently large S, or good enough hypotheses, to choose in all confidence. (Insufficient context)
- If $Ea - I$ or $Eb - I$ equals zero, then the corresponding hypothesis is the valid one. (Sufficient context) To understand this better, we might want to look at an example of each outcome.

Suppose that we are in Ancient Greece, and are ignorant of natural law altogether. We are asked to compare:

S. The apparent variety and adaptation of lifeforms on Earth.

A. Creation from one or many divine agents.

B. Gradual adaptation from generation to generation due to natural processes.

From this, we deduce:

Ea. One or many divine agents, and their act of creation.

Eb. Unknown processes acting on successive material forms.

I. Empty set.

In this case, what is the cardinality of Ea-I and Eb-I? At first glance, we should say that Eb-I is bigger. It presumes the existence of a great number of material forms, as well as processes acting on them. Ea-I only presumes the existence of a small number of divine agents, and one process of creative activity. Furthermore, inductive arguments would lend considerable support to A. So a person in this situation would choose A.

However, it is worth noticing that neither Ea-I and Eb-I are equal to zero, so we have an insufficient context. We now know that S is extremely incomplete: for one thing, it does not include any of the modern evidence for evolution, such as the fossil record, DNA, molecular and protein evolution, and so on. Furthermore, A and B are extremely unrefined, which is natural.

Now suppose that someone comes and tells us that the Earth is flat. We should be quite skeptical of such an assertion! We could then ask him how he can explain the curvature of the Earth, or the round shadow of the Earth on the Moon, or the pictures taken from space. He can then invoke a number of processes that are not known to science, such as some form of special refraction done by air. He will also need to make up more processes to explain the regularity of night and day. We can express this situation as such:

S. The curvature of the Earth, the round shadow of the Earth on the Moon, the pictures taken from space, the regularity of night and day.

A. The Earth is round.

B. The Earth is flat.

From this, we deduce:

Ea. The Earth.

Eb. The Earth, special process or processes of refraction.

I. The Earth.

In this case, Ea-I equals zero. We know that A is the valid hypothesis in this case. Eb-I entails one or many processes which are called superfluous.

It is important to stop here and note that Occam's Razor does not allow us to conclude that A is "better" than B, but rather that A is valid and that B is invalid, if the premise of the Razor are fulfilled (i.e. that A and B both explain S). This is because there is no evidence for the superfluous entities and explanations, thus they are not shown to exist. We can rephrase this in the following way:

A1. I alone explains S.

A2. S is evidence for I and only I.

B1. "Special process or processes of refraction" do not serve to explain S.

B2. There is no evidence for "special process or processes of refraction".

As such, there is no evidence left to support the existence of "special process or processes of refraction", and thus we can say that they are beyond rational discussion. What has no evidence whatsoever, is beyond rational discussion. It may be an internally coherent claim, but that is the extent to which we can pronounce it justified. We may conclude the following:

1. "The Earth is roughly spherical" is true.

2. "The Earth is flat" is false.

3. "Special process or processes of refraction" are not justified.

Let us now examine the situation we are placed in, within the atheism-theism debate.

S. The sum total of all material things, their properties and processes.

A. Material things change in time by virtue of natural law.

B. A god created all material things, which change in time by virtue of natural law and divine intervention.

Of course, theists could attack the relation that A explains S, but science gives us strong reason to trust this relation. Insofar as science is the discipline that studies natural phenomena, and therefore the relation between A and S, and has had tremendous success in proving this relation in innumerable areas of nature, we can make an inductive argument that the relation between A and S will continue.

Furthermore, we can point out that B does not explain S. For one thing, if a god created all material things, then we should expect things like logic, morality, principles and absolutes to be absent from the universe, from Materialist Apologetics. From the Problem of Evil, we should not expect any evil to exist. From the Argument of Scope, we should observe a universe made at a human scope, which is not what we observe. From the Cosmological Arguments, we should not expect the Big Bang to exist. The number of observed facts that contradict the relation between B and S is endless.

From all of these, we can make a cumulative case that B is not a valid explanation for S. But for the sake of the argument, we can assume that B is a valid explanation for S, to verify if Occam's Razor offers us supplemental proof for the falsity of the theistic hypothesis.

From this, we deduce:

Ea. All material entities and processes.

Eb. All material entities and processes, and a god with a creative process or processes.

I. All material entities and processes.

In this case, Ea-I equals zero, so we must judge the non-existence of a Creator and controller of the universe, strong-atheism, as the only valid position. Note, however, that I did mention that the relation between A and S is based on induction, and therefore we

must qualify our conclusion by saying that strong-atheism is shown to be probably true by Occam's Razor, not completely true.

Granted, a believer is free to invoke specific elements of S and try to prove that they cannot be explained by A. But to claim this is the equivalent of saying that the element is explained by B, which is a claim of divine intervention. As I detail in 'The Impossibility of Divine Intervention', to claim that divine intervention is possible demands total knowledge of natural law, or in this case to know all about A. Since we do not, such an argument cannot be made. So the "god-of-the-gaps" argument, apart from being an argument from ignorance, is just not a possibility.

Of course, we would be suspicious of the relation between A and S if we observed a fact deduced from theology. For instance, if we observed that time is not an integral part of the universe, or that matter popped from nothing, then we might hold theism as more credible.


But given that we do not observe such facts, and that a great number of facts of the universe contradict theism, we have to conclude that we should be far more suspicious of the relation between B and S, than we should be of the relation between A and S.

God is a parsimonious explanation

Main Article: [Divine simplicity](#)

Apologists sometimes argue that God is a simple explanation that is not suitable for elimination by Occam's razor.

However, divine simplicity is merely asserted and it is generally regarded by skeptics that proposing an entity that is [all powerful](#), [existing at all places](#), immortal and [all knowing](#) is assuming quite a bit! [Dawkins](#) called God the "[the ultimate 747](#)" because of that entity's shear complexity.

In any case, no possibility is ruled out by this "explanation", since "anything is possible for God" [Matthew 19:26](#) .

Therefore, the explanation has little predictive power which is the basis of the explanation's rejection. There is no need to resort to Occam's razor in this case.

Confusion with reductionism

Occam's Razor is sometimes confused with the related concept of reductionism, which is often accused of oversimplify problems. Occam's Razor has the requirement that explanations can be compared *only* when "all things being equal" in their predictive power. Therefore, it has no allowance for approximations of theories.

See also

- [Skepticism](#)

Outsider test

The **Outsider test** for faith (OTF) is a criterion for rational belief. [Religious](#) affiliation is largely determined by that of one's parents and native country. Believers are encouraged to test their beliefs by trying to see them from the perspective of someone outside the faith. Using this criterion, believers would be required to treat books such as the [Bible](#) with the same critical skepticism that they would apply to competing holy books, such as the [Koran](#) or the [Book of Mormon](#).

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Usage

The term "outsider test" was proposed by [John Loftus](#), a former [Christian apologist](#) turned [atheist](#).
Quotes from Loftus on the subject:

- "Test your beliefs as if you were an outsider to the faith you are evaluating."
- "The best way to test one's adopted religious faith is from the perspective of an outsider with the same level of skepticism used to evaluate other religious faiths."
- "Tell believers to examine their faith critically and most all of them will say they already do. But tell them to subject their own faith to the same level of skepticism they use when examining the other religious faiths they reject and that will get their attention."

Precursors

The outsider test codifies a form of argument that has existed in critiques of religion for some time.

[Thomas Jefferson](#) [in a letter to his nephew Peter Carr](#), offers some advice on how to study religion:

"In the first place, divest yourself of all bias in favor of novelty & singularity of opinion.... You will naturally examine first, the religion of your own country. Read the Bible, then as you would read Livy or Tacitus.... In fine, I repeat, you must lay aside all prejudice on both sides, and neither believe nor reject anything, because any other persons, or description of persons, have rejected or believed it. Your own reason is the only oracle given you by heaven, and you are answerable, not for the rightness, but uprightness of the decision."

[Robert Ingersoll](#) from his lecture "The Gods" (1872):

"All that is necessary, as it seems to me, to convince any reasonable person that the Bible is simply and purely of human invention -- of barbarian invention -- is to read it. Read it as you would any other book; think of it as you would of any other; get the bandage of reverence from your eyes; drive from your heart the phantom of fear; push from the throne of your brain the coiled form of superstition -- then read the Holy Bible, and you will be amazed that you ever, for one moment, supposed a being of infinite wisdom, goodness and purity, to be the author of such ignorance and of such atrocity."

In [Bertrand Russell](#)'s speech "[Am I An Atheist Or An Agnostic?](#)", Russell said that he could not prove there was no God, but could not disprove the existence of the Homeric gods either. More recently, [Richard Dawkins](#) argued "We are all [atheists](#) about most of the gods that humanity has ever believed in. Some of us just go one god further."

A similar slogan, coined by [Stephen Roberts](#) and used in many internet taglines, says, "I contend we are both atheists, I just believe in one fewer [god](#) than you do. When you understand why you dismiss all the other possible gods, you will understand why I dismiss yours."

The basic idea of the outsider test has also been applied to questions more specific than the existence of God. For example [Richard Carrier](#), in an [article](#) on [Jesus' resurrection](#), argued "Can you imagine a movement today claiming that a soldier in World War Two rose physically from the dead, but when you asked for proof all they offered you were a mere handful of anonymous religious tracts written in the 1980's? Would it be even remotely reasonable to believe such a thing on so feeble a proof? Well — no."

In his *Natural History of Religion*, [David Hume](#) gives a long discussion of how the beliefs of one religion may appear absurd to another, though he draws no explicit conclusions from this fact. Included in this discussion is an imagined exchange between a Catholic and a pagan:

"How can you worship leeks and onions? we shall suppose a SORBONNIST to say to a priest of SAIS. If we worship them, replies the latter; at least, we do not, at the same time, eat them. But what strange objects of adoration are cats and monkies? says the learned doctor. They are at least as good as the relics or rotten bones of martyrs, answers his no less learned antagonist. Are you not mad, insists the Catholic, to cut one another's throat about the preference of a cabbage or a cucumber? Yes, says the pagan; I allow it, if you will confess, that those are still madder, who fight about the preference among volumes of sophistry, ten thousand of which are not equal in value to one cabbage or cucumber."*

**This is a reference to the doctrine that in communion, the bread literally becomes the body of Jesus, whom Christians worship, putting them in the position of eating their god.*

Comparison with mental illness

"If you take a belief someone holds and you don't cloak it under the robe of religion, then this would be tantamount to the guy being schizophrenic and 'let's commit him to a mental hospital'. [For example,] this prophet has gone on a winged horse somewhere [e.g. heaven].^[1]"

See also

- [Argument from inconsistent revelations](#)
- [Argument from locality](#)
- [Skepticism](#)
- [Star Trek rule](#)

External links

- ["The Outsider Test"](#)
- ["Natural History of Religion"](#)

References

- Loftus, John W. *Why I Rejected Christianity: A Former Apologist Explains* 1st Edition (Trafford 2006).
- Loftus, John W. *Why I Became an Atheist: A Former Preacher Rejects Christianity* (Prometheus Books, 2008).
- Loftus, John W. ed. *The Christian Delusion: Why Faith Fails* (Prometheus Books, 2010), ch. 4
- Loftus, John W. ed. *The End of Christianity* (Prometheus Books, 2011)

Argument from locality

The **argument from locality** states that every [religion](#) that has ever existed, or will ever exist, had an origin at a specific time and place within a specific [culture](#). Any [god](#) or gods who truly wanted all humans to follow them logically could have started their [religion](#) at the very instant that the human race appeared and would have informed all cultures, not just one, thus giving all humans who would ever be born an equal chance at joining. The fact that no religion has ever done this shows that no religion is the "correct" one — or, at least, that no religion so far has had a "rational" [deity](#).

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Tenets of the argument

1. Any god who wanted all humans to follow him/her would have revealed themselves to all humans at once, not just one culture or race at a time.
2. If rewards and punishment are given for [belief](#) and nonbelief respectively, then any god who waits hundreds or thousands of years before revealing itself to humans is unfair, since the people who lived and died before this revelation didn't have a chance to believe.
 - If believers are rewarded for their belief then it is unfair for only a specific group of people to receive more evidence than others.
 - And vice versa: if nonbelief is punished then it is also unfair for some people to receive less evidence than others (or no evidence at all).
3. Any religion that strongly reflects the beliefs and thoughts of the time in which it was created is not the "true" one.

The argument and Christianity

1. God revealed himself only to the [Jews](#) at first. He was the god of the Jews and no one else. It wasn't until [Christianity](#) came along that he became the god of the world.
2. Even though Christianity states that its god will save anyone who follows him, he still waited thousands of years before revealing this plan to humanity. Plus, the reason he suddenly decided to save all humans instead of just the Jews was never explained — thus making it unfair for the millions of non-Jews who lived before [Christ](#), who never got a chance to be saved.

3. The Christian god rewards believers. Thus, the fact that he only revealed himself to a small group of people in the [Middle East](#) 2,000 years ago and left it up to humans to spread his word is very unfair of him.
4. Non-belief is punished as well, which reinforces the unfairness of only telling a small group of people.
5. The [Bible](#) strongly reflects the beliefs and thoughts of the time (e.g. a flat earth, women being inferior to men, [slavery](#), etc.).

Possible objections

[William Lane Craig](#) provided the following rebuttals in his debate with [Christopher Hitchens](#):

1. The population was not that large before Jesus
2. Jesus appears just before the exponential explosion of the population
3. The conditions were stable – Roman Empire, peace, literacy, law, etc.

Nevertheless, the above rebuttals fail to address the following:

1. What happens to those who have never even heard of Christianity due to distance in time or space? What chance do they have in escaping damnation? Did they all go to Hell when they died, simply because God chose not to tell them the way to salvation? Or did they somehow get to Heaven without the redemptive powers of Jesus or even the Jewish law? And if so, if this is possible, then what was the point of sending Jesus or giving the law at all?
2. Why does the Bible strongly reflect the beliefs and thoughts of the time? Why not something new?
3. The above is a strong argument that any God which might exist is not [omnibenevolent](#) and is not just or fair as most Christians believe God to be. It is consistent with the near [malthusian](#) concept of God that [Fred Phelps](#) for example preaches though most Christians disagree strongly with Phelps.

Fortunately there is no reason to believe that the unjust, unfair -by human standards- God of the bible exists.

Maybe God has already expected that some people will not believe in him regardless of the evidence. Maybe God has his own standards to judge us. Maybe God wants us to explore the wonders of the world on our own. Maybe God wants us to develop our sense of morality on our own. Maybe God rewards us for using our critical faculty that he gave us and punishes blind faith.

Maybe. Yeah, maybe God does not exist at all!

See also

- [Outsider test](#)
- [Country-Faith phenomenon](#)

Reference

- [The Argument from Locality](#) at Ebonmusings
- [If God Exists](#), DarkMatter2525, 18 Dec 2015

Argument from inconsistent revelations

The **Argument from inconsistent revelations** is based upon the many number of [interpretations](#) of [holy texts](#) and [scripture](#). If scripture was revealed to man by [God](#) and God is infallible, then all revelations would be the same, inerrant text (notwithstanding necessary linguistic and, perhaps, cultural differences).

But contradictions and vagaries still remain in the [Bible](#) and the holy texts of other [religions](#). As a result, there are many different groups of people with many different interpretations.

Thus, God cannot exist in the sense that [Christians](#) claim, because his own writings betray his capacity for error — or betray his non-existence. Either God is fallible, or humans wrote the Bible and God was not involved. Needless to say, Christians don't like either of those possibilities.

"[There] is a lack of agreement among believers. If there is a deity that [loves and cares about you], why do no two believers agree on any social or moral issue? You name it: gay marriage, doctor assisted suicide, stem cell research, the war, these social issues we are struggle with. You find devote, praying, Bible believing Christians on both sides of those issues. Paul wrote in the Bible 'God is not the author of confusion'. But can you think of a single book that has caused more confusion than that Bible? [...] Why shouldn't it be clear? Why shouldn't this all powerful and all loving deity make it clear to us? It is not."

— [Dan Barker](#)^[1]

Argument from existence of atheists

Main article: [Argument from nonbelief](#)

Closely related is the **argument from existence of [atheists](#)**:

1. God is [omniscient](#).
2. God is [omnipotent](#).
3. God wants everyone to believe in him, Christians, especially those who set out to evangelize generally assume this.
4. Since God is omniscient, he knows exactly what demonstration would convince any given person that he exists.
5. Since God is omnipotent, he is capable of performing this demonstration.
6. Since God wants everyone to believe in him, he wants to perform this demonstration.
7. However, atheists manifestly exist.
8. Therefore, the god described by the first three conditions does not exist.

Of course, an [apologist](#) could reply to this by saying that atheists *do* know that God exists but are just denying him out of stubbornness. Indeed, this response has been used many

times by different apologists. Admittedly, some non-believers do disbelieve simply out of stubbornness, but most have good *reasons* for their disbelief, and thus this response isn't an effective one.

See also

- [Christians disagree over everything](#)
- [Outsider test](#)

References

1. [↑](#) ^[1]

Emotional pleas against the existence of God

Belief and non-belief are largely motivated by the emotional appeal of the belief. [Friedrich Nietzsche](#), who was not overly fond of reasoned and dialectic arguments, satirised logical arguments for and against God in [This Spake Zarathura](#), while also acknowledging that belief is motivated by emotions:

But that I may reveal my heart entirely unto you, my friends: IF there were gods, how could I endure it to be no God! THEREFORE there are no Gods.

Yea, I have drawn the conclusion; now, however, doth it draw me.—

God is a conjecture: but who could drink all the bitterness of this conjecture without dying?

This argument is an inversion of emotional pleas to [argue for God's existence](#).

"It isn't just that I don't believe in God and, naturally, hope that I'm right in my belief. It's that I hope there is no God! I don't want there to be a God; I don't want the universe to be like that. ^[1]"

Counter Arguments

This argument is a [non sequitur](#) but may be intentional in some cases. The argument's point could alternatively be understood as a descriptive explanation of unbelief: "belief in God is uncomfortable".

References

- [↑] [\[1\]](#)

See also

- [Non sequitur](#)
- [Appeal to emotion](#)
- [Morality](#)
- [Emotional pleas](#)

Bible Inconsistencies - Bible Contradictions?

Compiled by [Donald Morgan](#)

Links to other articles in this series:

[Key to Abbreviations](#)
[Introduction to the Bible and Biblical Problems](#)
[Fatal Bible Flaws?](#)
[Bible Absurdities](#)
[Bible Atrocities](#)
[Bible Precepts: Questionable Guidelines?](#)
[Bible Vulgarities](#)

IMPORTANT: These lists are meant to identify *possible* problems in the Bible, especially those that are inherent in a *literalist* or *fundamentalist* interpretation. Keep in mind, however, that what constitutes a valid problem is to some extent a matter of opinion. You may disagree that these are, in fact, genuine biblical problems, but it is the author's opinion that a perfect and omnipotent God could, should, and would see to it that such problems did not exist in a book which s/he had inspired.

IMPORTANT: Even though accepted and common definitions of the two terms often make them synonymous, "inconsistencies" do not necessarily equate to "contradictions." An inconsistency involves a lack of harmonious uniformity, regularity, steady continuity, or agreement. Thus, a contradiction is necessarily an inconsistency, but an inconsistency is not necessarily a contradiction.

[GE 1:3-5](#) On the first day, God created light, then separated light and darkness.

[GE 1:14-19](#) The sun (which separates night and day) wasn't created until the fourth day.

[GE 1:11-12, 26-27](#) Trees were created before man was created.

[GE 2:4-9](#) Man was created before trees were created.

[GE 1:20-21, 26-27](#) Birds were created before man was created.

[GE 2:7, 19](#) Man was created before birds were created.

[GE 1:24-27](#) Animals were created before man was created.

[GE 2:7, 19](#) Man was created before animals were created.

[GE 1:26](#) Man is to have dominion over fish, birds, cattle, and all wild animals, yet--

[GE 2:15-17](#) It is wrong to be able to tell good from evil, right from wrong.

GE 1:26-27 Man and woman were created at the same time.
GE 2:7, 21-22 Man was created first, woman sometime later.

GE 1:28 God encourages reproduction.
LE 12:1-8 God requires purification rites following childbirth which, in effect, makes childbirth a sin. (Note: The period for purification following the birth of a daughter is twice that for a son.)

GE 1:31 God was pleased with his creation.
GE 6:5-6 God was not pleased with his creation.
(Note: That God should be displeased is inconsistent with the concept of omniscience as well as with the fact that God allegedly does not change his mind: NU 23:19-20, 1SA 15:29, JA 1:17.)

GE 2:4, 4:26, 12:8, 22:14-16, 26:25 God was already known as "the Lord" (Jahveh or Jehovah) much earlier than the time of Moses.
EX 6:2-3 God was first known as "the Lord" (Jahveh or Jehovah) at the time of the Egyptian Bondage, during the life of Moses.

GE 2:17 Adam was to die the very day that he ate the forbidden fruit.
GE 5:5 Adam lived 930 years.

GE 2:15-17, 3:4-6 It is wrong to want to be able to tell good from evil.
HE 5:13-14 It is immature to be unable to tell good from evil.

GE 4:4-5 God prefers Abel's offering and has no regard for Cain's.
2CH 19:7, AC 10:34, RO 2:11 God shows no partiality. He treats all alike.

GE 4:9 God asks Cain where his brother Able is.
PR 15:3, JE 16:17, 23:24-25, HE 4:13 God is everywhere. He sees everything. Nothing is hidden from his view.

GE 4:15, DT 32:19-27, IS 34:8 God is a vengeful god.
EX 15:3, IS 42:13, HE 12:29 God is a warrior. God is a consuming fire.
EX 20:5, 34:14, DT 4:24, 5:9, 6:15, 29:20, 32:21 God is a jealous god.
LE 26:7-8, NU 31:17-18, DT 20:16-17, JS 10:40, JG 14:19, EZ 9:5-7 The Spirit of God is (sometimes) murder and killing.
NU 25:3-4, DT 6:15, 9:7-8, 29:20, 32:21, PS 7:11, 78:49, JE 4:8, 17:4, 32:30-31, ZP 2:2 God is angry. His anger is sometimes fierce.
2SA 22:7-8 (KJV) "I called to the Lord; ... he heard my voice; ... The earth trembled and quaked, ... because he was angry. Smoke came from his nostrils. Consuming fire came from his mouth, burning coals blazed out of it."
EZ 6:12, NA 1:2, 6 God is jealous and furious. He reserves wrath for, and takes revenge on, his enemies. "... who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and rocks are thrown down by him."
2CO 13:11, 14, 1JN 4:8, 16 God is love.

[GA 5:22-23](#) The fruit of the Spirit of God is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

[GE 4:16](#) Cain went away (or out) from the presence of the Lord.

[JE 23:23-24](#) A man cannot hide from God. God fills heaven and earth.

[GE 6:3](#) The Lord said, "My spirit will not be in man forever, for he is only flesh; so the days of his life will be a hundred and twenty years."

[GE 9:29](#) Noah lived nine hundred and fifty years.

[GE 6:4](#) There were Nephilim (giants) before the Flood.

[GE 7:21](#) All creatures other than Noah and his clan were annihilated by the Flood.

[NU 13:33](#) There were Nephilim after the Flood.

[GE 6:6](#), [EX 32:14](#), [NU 14:20](#), [1SA 15:35](#), [2SA 24:16](#) God does change his mind.

[NU 23:19-20](#), [1SA 15:29](#), [JA 1:17](#) God does not change his mind.

[GE 6:19-22](#), [7:8-9](#), [7:14-16](#) Two of each kind are to be taken, and are taken, aboard Noah's Ark.

[GE 7:2-5](#) Seven pairs of some kinds are to be taken, and are taken, aboard the Ark.

[GE 7:1](#) Noah was righteous.

[JB 1:1,8](#), [JB 2:3](#) Job was righteous.

[LK 1:6](#) Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous.

[JA 5:16](#) Some men are righteous, (which makes their prayers effective).

[1JN 3:6-9](#) Christians become righteous (or else they are not really Christians).

[RO 3:10](#), [3:23](#), [1JN 1:8-10](#) No one was or is righteous.

[GE 7:7](#) Noah and his clan enter the Ark.

[GE 7:13](#) They enter the Ark (again?).

[GE 11:7-9](#) God sows discord.

[PR 6:16-19](#) God hates anyone who sows discord.

[GE 11:9](#) At Babel, the Lord confused the language of the whole world.

[1CO 14:33](#) Paul says that God is not the author of confusion.

[GE 11:12](#) Arpachshad [Arphaxad] was the father of Shelah.

[LK 3:35-36](#) Cainan was the father of Shelah. Arpachshad was the grandfather of Shelah.

[GE 11:26](#) Terah was 70 years old when his son Abram was born.

[GE 11:32](#) Terah was 205 years old when he died (making Abram 135 at the time).

[GE 12:4](#), [AC 7:4](#) Abram was 75 when he left Haran. This was after Terah died. Thus, Terah could have been no more than 145 when he died; or Abram was only 75 years old after he had lived 135 years.

GE 12:7, 17:1, 18:1, 26:2, 32:30, EX 3:16, 6:2-3, 24:9-11, 33:11, NU 12:7-8, 14:14, JB 42:5, AM 7:7-8, 9:1 God is seen.

EX 33:20, JN 1:18, 1JN 4:12 God is not seen. No one can see God's face and live. No one has ever seen him.

GE 10:5, 20, 31 There were many languages before the Tower of Babel.

GE 11:1 There was only one language before the Tower of Babel.

GE 15:9, EX 20:24, 29:10-42, LE 1:1-7:38, NU 28:1-29:40, God details sacrificial offerings.

JE 7:21-22 God says he did no such thing.

GE 16:15, 21:1-3, GA 4:22 Abraham had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac.

HE 11:17 Abraham had only one son.

GE 17:1, 35:11, 1CH 29:11-12, LK 1:37 God is omnipotent. Nothing is impossible with (or for) God.

JG 1:19 Although God was with Judah, together they could not defeat the plainsmen because the latter had iron chariots.

GE 17:7, 10-11 The covenant of circumcision is to be everlasting.

GA 6:15 It is of no consequence.

GE 17:8 God promises Abraham the land of Canaan as an "everlasting possession."

GE 25:8, AC 7:2-5, HE 11:13 Abraham died with the promise unfulfilled.

GE 17:15-16, 20:11-12, 22:17 Abraham and his half sister, Sarai, are married and receive God's blessings.

LE 20:17, DT 27:20-23 Incest is wrong.

GE 18:20-21 God decides to "go down" to see what is going on.

PR 15:3, JE 16:17, 23:24-25, HE 4:13 God is everywhere. He sees everything. Nothing is hidden from his view.

GE 19:30-38 While he is drunk, Lot's two daughters "lie with him," become pregnant, and give birth to his offspring.

2PE 2:7 Lot was "just" and "righteous."

GE 22:1-12, DT 8:2 God tempts (tests) Abraham and Moses.

JG 2:22 God himself says that he does test (tempt).

1CO 10:13 Paul says that God controls the extent of our temptations.

JA 1:13 God tests (tempts) no one.

GE 27:28 "May God give you ... an abundance of grain and new wine."

DT 7:13 If they follow his commandments, God will bless the fruit of their wine.

PS 104:15 God gives us wine to gladden the heart.

JE 13:12 "... every bottle shall be filled with wine."

JN 2:1-11 According to the author of John, Jesus' first miracle

was turning water to wine.

[RO 14:21](#) It is good to refrain from drinking wine.

[GE 35:10](#) God says Jacob is to be called Jacob no longer; henceforth his name is Israel.

[GE 46:2](#) At a later time, God himself uses the name Jacob.

[GE 36:11](#) The sons of Eliphaz were Teman, Omar, Zepho, Gatam, and Kenaz.

[GE 36:15-16](#) Teman, Omar, Zepho, Kenaz.

[1CH 1:35-36](#) Teman, Omar, Zephi, Gatam, Kenaz, Timna, and Amalek.

[GE 49:2-28](#) The fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel are: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Zebulun, Issachar, Dan, Gad, Asher, Naphtali, Joseph, and Benjamin.

[RE 7:4-8](#) (Leaves out the tribe of Dan, but adds Manasseh.)

[GE 50:13](#) Jacob was buried in a cave at Machpelah bought from Ephron the Hittite.

[AC 7:15-16](#) He was buried in the sepulchre at Shechem bought from the sons of Hamor.

[EX 3:1](#) Jethro was the father-in-law of Moses.

[NU 10:29](#), [JG 4:11](#) (KJV) Hobab was the father-in-law of Moses.

[EX 3:20-22](#), [DT 20:13-17](#) God instructs the Israelites to despoil the Egyptians, to plunder their enemies.

[EX 20:15](#), [17](#), [LE 19:13](#) God prohibits stealing, defrauding, or robbing a neighbor.

[EX 4:11](#) God decides who will be dumb, deaf, blind, etc.

[2CO 13:11](#), [14](#), [1JN 4:8](#), [16](#) God is a god of love.

[EX 9:3-6](#) God destroys all the cattle (including horses) belonging to the Egyptians.

[EX 9:9-11](#) The people and the cattle are afflicted with boils.

[EX 12:12](#), [29](#) All the first-born of the cattle of the Egyptians are destroyed.

[EX 14:9](#) After having all their cattle destroyed, then afflicted with boils, and then their first-born cattle destroyed, the Egyptians pursue Moses on horseback.

[EX 12:13](#) The Israelites have to mark their houses with blood in order for God to see which houses they occupy and "pass over" them.

[PR 15:3](#), [JE 16:17](#), [23:24-25](#), [HE 4:13](#) God is everywhere. He sees everything. Nothing is hidden from God.

[EX 12:37](#), [NU 1:45-46](#) The number of men of military age who take part in the Exodus is given as more than 600,000.

Allowing for women, children, and older men would probably mean that a total of about 2,000,000 Israelites left Egypt.

[1KI 20:15](#) All the Israelites, including children, number only 7000 at a later time.

[EX 15:3](#), [17:16](#), [NU 25:4](#), [32:14](#), [IS 42:13](#) God is a man of war--he is fierce and angry.

RO 15:33, 2CO 13:11, 14, 1JN 4:8, 16 God is a god of love and peace.

EX 20:1-17 God gave the law directly to Moses (without using an intermediary).

GA 3:19 The law was ordained through angels by a mediator (an intermediary).

EX 20:4 God prohibits the making of any graven images whatsoever.

EX 25:18 God enjoins the making of two graven images.

EX 20:5, 34:7, NU 14:18, DT 5:9, IS 14:21-22 Children are to suffer for their parent's sins.

DT 24:16, EZ 18:19-20 Children are not to suffer for their parent's sins.

EX 20:8-11, 31:15-17, 35:1-3 No work is to be done on the Sabbath, not even lighting a fire. The commandment is permanent, and death is required for infractions.

MK 2:27-28 Jesus says that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath (after his disciples were criticized for breaking the Sabbath).

RO 14:5, CN 2:14-16 Paul says the Sabbath commandment was temporary, and to decide for yourself regarding its observance.

EX 20:12, DT 5:16, MT 15:4, 19:19, MK 7:10, 10:19, LK 18:20 Honor your father and your mother is one of the ten commandments. It is reinforced by Jesus.

MT 10:35-37, LK 12:51-53, 14:26 Jesus says that he has come to divide families; that a man's foes will be those of his own household; that you must hate your father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, and even your own life to be a disciple.

MT 23:9 Jesus says to call no man on earth your father.

EX 20:13, DT 5:17, MK 10:19, LK 18:20, RO 13:9, JA 2:11 God prohibits killing.

GE 34:1-35:5 God condones trickery and killing.

EX 32:27, DT 7:2, 13:15, 20:1-18 God orders killing.

2KI 19:35 An angel of the Lord slaughters 185,000 men. (Note: See [Atrocities](#) section for many more examples.)

EX 20:14 God prohibits adultery.

HO 1:2 God instructs Hosea to "take a wife of harlotry."

EX 21:23-25, LE 24:20, DT 19:21 A life for a life, an eye for an eye, etc.

MT 5:38-44, LK 6:27-29 Turn the other cheek. Love your enemies.

EX 23:7 God prohibits the killing of the innocent.

NU 31:17-18, DT 7:2, JS 6:21-27, 7:19-26, 8:22-

25, 10:20, 40, 11:8-15, 20, JG 11:30-39, 21:10-12, 1SA

15:3 God orders or approves the complete extermination of groups of people which include innocent women and/or children.

(Note: See [Atrocities](#) section for many other examples of the killing of innocents.)

EX 34:6, DT 7:9-10, TS 1:2 God is faithful and truthful. He does not lie.
NU 14:30 God breaks his promise.

EX 34:6, DT 7:9-10, TS 1:2 God is faithful and truthful. He does not lie.
1KI 22:21-23 God condones a spirit of deception.

EX 34:6, DT 7:9-10, TS 1:2 God is faithful and truthful. He does not lie.
2TH 2:11-12 God deludes people, making them believe what is false, so as to be able to condemn them. (Note: some versions use the word persuade here. The context makes clear, however, that deception is involved.)

EX 34:6-7, JS 24:19, 1CH 16:34 God is faithful, holy and good.
IS 45:6-7, AM 3:6 God is responsible for evil.

EX 34:6-7, HE 9:27 God remembers sin, even when it has been forgiven.
JE 31:34 God does not remember sin when it has been forgiven.

LE 3:17 God himself prohibits forever the eating of blood and fat.
MT 15:11, CN 2:20-22 Jesus and Paul say that such rules don't matter--they are only human injunctions.

LE 19:18, MT 22:39 Love your neighbor [as much as] yourself.
1CO 10:24 Put your neighbor ahead of yourself.

LE 21:10 The chief priest is not to rend his clothes.
MT 26:65, MK 14:63 He does so during the trial of Jesus.

LE 25:37, PS 15:1, 5 It is wrong to lend money at interest.
MT 25:27, LK 19:23-27 It is wrong to lend money without interest.

NU 11:33 God inflicts sickness.
JB 2:7 Satan inflicts sickness.

NU 15:24-28 Sacrifices can, in at least some case, take away sin.
HE 10:11 They never take away sin.

NU 25:9 24,000 died in the plague.
1CO 10:8 23,000 died in the plague.

NU 30:2 God enjoins the making of vows (oaths).
MT 5:33-37 Jesus forbids doing so, saying that they arise from evil (or the Devil).

NU 33:38 Aaron died on Mt. Hor.
DT 10:6 Aaron died in Mosera.

NU 33:41-42 After Aaron's death, the Israelites journeyed from Mt. Hor, to Zalmonah, to Punon, etc.
DT 10:6-7 It was from Mosera, to Gudgodah, to Jotbath.

DT 6:15, 9:7-8, 29:20, 32:21 God is sometimes angry.
MT 5:22 Anger is a sin.

DT 7:9-10 God destroys his enemies.
MT 5:39-44 Do not resist your enemies. Love them.

DT 18:20-22 A false prophet is one whose words do not come true. Death is required.
EZ 14:9 A prophet who is deceived, is deceived by God himself. Death is still required.

DT 23:1 A castrate may not enter the assembly of the Lord.
IS 56:4-5 Some castrates will receive special rewards.

DT 23:1 A castrate may not enter the assembly of the Lord.
MT 19:12 Men are encouraged to consider making themselves castrates for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

DT 24:1-5 A man can divorce his wife simply because she displeases him and both he and his wife can remarry.
MK 10:2-12 Divorce is wrong, and to remarry is to commit adultery.

DT 24:16, 2KI 14:6, 2CH 25:4, EZ 18:20 Children are not to suffer for their parent's sins.
RO 5:12, 19, 1CO 15:22 Death is passed to all men by the sin of Adam.

DT 30:11-20 It is possible to keep the law.
RO 3:20-23 It is not possible to keep the law.

JS 11:20 God shows no mercy to some.
LK 6:36, JA 5:11 God is merciful.

JG 4:21 Sisera was sleeping when Jael killed him.
JG 5:25-27 Sisera was standing.

JS 10:38-40 Joshua himself captured Debir.
JG 1:11-15 It was Othniel, who thereby obtained the hand of Caleb's daughter, Achsah.

1SA 8:2-22 Samuel informs God as to what he has heard from others.
PR 15:3, JE 16:17, 23:24-25, HE 4:13 God is everywhere. He sees and hears everything.

1SA 9:15-17 The Lord tells Samuel that Saul has been chosen to lead the Israelites and will save them from the Philistines.

1SA 15:35 The Lord is sorry that he has chosen Saul.
1SA 31:4-7 Saul commits suicide and the Israelites are overrun by the Philistines.

1SA 15:7-8, 20 The Amalekites are utterly destroyed.
1SA 27:8-9 They are utterly destroyed (again?).
1SA 30:1, 17-18 They raid Ziklag and David smites them (again?).

1SA 16:10-11, 17:12 Jesse had seven sons plus David, or eight total.

1CH 2:13-15 He had seven total.

1SA 16:19-23 Saul knew David well before the latter's encounter with Goliath.

1SA 17:55-58 Saul did not know David at the time of his encounter with Goliath and had to ask about David's identity.

1SA 17:50 David killed Goliath with a slingshot.

1SA 17:51 David killed Goliath (again?) with a sword.

1SA 17:50 David killed Goliath.

2SA 21:19 Elhanan killed Goliath. (Note: Some translations insert the words "the brother of" before Elhanan. These are an addition to the earliest manuscripts in an apparent attempt to rectify this inconsistency.)

1SA 21:1-6 Ahimalech was high priest when David ate the bread.

MK 2:26 Abiathar was high priest at the time.

1SA 28:6 Saul inquired of the Lord, but received no answer.

1CH 10:13-14 Saul died for not inquiring of the Lord.

1SA 31:4-6 Saul killed himself by falling on his sword.

2SA 1:2-10 Saul, at his own request, was slain by an Amalekite.

2SA 21:12 Saul was killed by the Philistines on Gilboa.

1CH 10:13-14 Saul was slain by God.

2SA 6:23 Michal was childless.

2SA 21:8 (KJV) She had five sons.

2SA 24:1 The Lord inspired David to take the census.

1CH 21:1 Satan inspired the census.

2SA 24:9 The census count was: Israel 800,000 and Judah 500,000.

1CH 21:5 The census count was: Israel 1,100,000 and Judah 470,000.

2SA 24:10-17 David sinned in taking the census.

1KI 15:5 David's only sin (ever) was in regard to another matter.

2SA 24:24 David paid 50 shekels of silver for the purchase of a property.

1CH 21:22-25 He paid 600 shekels of gold.

1KI 3:12 God made Solomon the wisest man that ever lived, yet

1KI 11:1-13 Solomon loved many foreign women (against God's explicit prohibition) who turned him to other gods (for which he deserved death).

1KI 3:12, 4:29, 10:23-24, 2CH 9:22-23 God made Solomon the wisest king and the wisest man that ever lived. There never has been nor will be another like him.

MT 12:42, LK 11:31 Jesus says: "... now one greater than Solomon is here."

1KI 4:26 Solomon had 40,000 horses (or stalls for horses).
2CH 9:25 He had 4,000 horses (or stalls for horses).

1KI 5:16 Solomon had 3,300 supervisors.
2CH 2:2 He had 3,600 supervisors.

1KI 7:15-22 The two pillars were 18 cubits high.
2CH 3:15-17 They were 35 cubits high.

1KI 7:26 Solomon's "molten sea" held 2000 "baths" (1 bath = about 8 gallons).
2CH 4:5 It held 3000 "baths."

1KI 8:12, 2CH 6:1, PS 18:11 God dwells in thick darkness.
1TI 6:16 God dwells in unapproachable light.

1KI 8:13, AC 7:47 Solomon, whom God made the wisest man ever, built his temple as an abode for God.
AC 7:48-49 God does not dwell in temples built by men.

1KI 9:28 420 talents of gold were brought back from Ophir.
2CH 8:18 450 talents of gold were brought back from Ophir.

1KI 15:14 Asa did not remove the high places.
2CH 14:2-3 He did remove them.

1KI 16:6-8 Baasha died in the 26th year of King Asa's reign.
2CH 16:1 Baasha built a city in the 36th year of King Asa's reign.

1KI 16:23 Omri became king in the thirty-first year of Asa's reign and he reigned for a total of twelve years.
1KI 16:28-29 Omri died, and his son Ahab became king in the thirty- eighth year of Asa's reign. (Note: Thirty-one through thirty-eight equals a reign of seven or eight years.)

1KI 22:23, 2CH 18:22, 2TH 2:11 God himself causes a lying spirit.
PR 12:22 God abhors lying lips and delights in honesty.

1KI 22:42-43 Jehoshaphat did not remove the high places.
2CH 17:5-6 He did remove them.

2KI 2:11 Elijah went up to heaven.
JN 3:13 Only the Son of Man (Jesus) has ever ascended to heaven.
2CO 12:2-4 An unnamed man, known to Paul, went up to heaven and came back.
HE 11:5 Enoch was translated to heaven.

2KI 4:32-37 A dead child is raised (well before the time of Jesus).
MT 9:18-25, JN 11:38-44 Two dead persons are raised (by Jesus himself).
AC 26:23 Jesus was the first to rise from the dead.

[2KI 8:25-26](#) Ahaziah was 22 years old when he began his reign.

[2CH 22:2](#) He was 42 when he began his reign.

[Note: Some translations use "twenty-two" here in an attempt to rectify this discrepancy. The Hebrew is clear, however, that 2CH 22:2 is 42. The Hebrew words involved are Strong's H705 and H8147, "forty" and "two," respectively.]

[2KI 9:27](#) Jehu shot Ahaziah near Ibleam. Ahaziah fled to Meggido and died there.

[2CH 22:9](#) Ahaziah was found hiding in Samaria, brought to Jehu, and put to death.

[2KI 16:5](#) The King of Syria and the son of the King of Israel did not conquer Ahaz.

[2CH 28:5-6](#) They did conquer Ahaz.

[2KI 24:8](#) Jehoiachin (Jehoiakim) was eighteen years old when he began to reign.

[2CH 36:9](#) He was eight.

(Note: This discrepancy has been "corrected" in some versions.)

[2KI 24:8](#) Jehoiachin (Jehoiakim) reigned three months.

[2CH 36:9](#) He reigned three months and ten days.

[2KI 24:17](#) Jehoiachin (Jehoiakim) was succeeded by his uncle.

[2CH 36:10](#) He was succeeded by his brother.

[1CH 3:11-13](#) The lineage is: Joram, Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah, Azariah, Jotham.

[MT 1:8-9](#) It is: Joram, Uzziah, Jotham, etc.

[1CH 3:19](#) Pedaiah was the father of Zerubbabel.

[ER 3:2](#) Shealtiel was the father of Zerubbabel.

[2CH 19:7](#), [AC 10:34](#), [RO 2:11](#) There is no injustice or partiality with the Lord.

[RO 9:15-18](#) God has mercy on (and hardens the hearts of) whom he pleases.

[ER 2:3-64](#) (Gives the whole congregation as 42,360 while the actual sum of the numbers is about 30,000.)

[JB 2:3-6](#), [21:7-13](#), [2TI 3:12](#) The godly are persecuted and chastised but the wicked grow old, wealthy, and powerful, unchastised by God.

[PS 55:23](#), [92:12-14](#), [PR 10:2-3](#), [27-31](#), [12:2](#), [21](#) The lives of the wicked are cut short. The righteous flourish and obtain favor from the Lord.

[PS 10:1](#) God cannot be found in time of need. He is "far off."

[PS 145:18](#) God is near to all who call upon him in truth.

[PS 22:1-2](#) God sometimes forsakes his children. He does not answer.

[PS 46:1](#) God is a refuge, a strength, a very present help.

PS 30:5, JE 3:12, MI 7:18 God's anger does not last forever.
JE 17:4, MT 25:46 It does last forever. (He has provided for eternal punishment.)

PS 58:10-11 The righteous shall rejoice when he sees vengeance.

PR 24:16-18 Do not rejoice when your enemy falls or stumbles.

PS 78:69, EC 1:4, 3:14 The earth was established forever.
PS 102:25-26, MT 24:35, MK 13:31, LK 21:33, HE 1:10-11, 2PE 3:10 The earth will someday perish.

PR 3:13, 4:7, 19:8, JA 1:5 Happy is the man who finds wisdom. Get wisdom.

LK 2:40, 52 Jesus was filled with wisdom and found favor with God.

1CO 1:19-25, 3:18-20 Wisdom is foolishness.

PR 12:2, RO 8:28 A good man obtains favor from the Lord.
2TI 3:12, HE 12:6 The godly will be persecuted.

PR 14:8 The wisdom of a prudent man is to discern his way.
MT 6:25-34 Take no thought for tomorrow. God will take care of you.

PR 14:15-18 The simple believe everything and acquire folly; the prudent look where they are going and are crowned with knowledge.

MT 18:3, LK 18:17 You must believe as little children do.

1CO 1:20, 27 God has made the wisdom of the world foolish so as to shame the wise.

PR 16:4 God made the wicked for the "day of evil."

MT 11:25, MK 4:11-12 God and Jesus hide some things from some people.

JN 6:65 No one can come to Jesus unless it is granted by God.

RO 8:28-30 Some are predestined to be called to God, believe in Jesus, and be justified.

RO 9:15-18 God has mercy on, and hardens the hearts of, whom he pleases.

2TH 2:11-12 God deceives the wicked so as to be able to condemn them.

1TI 2:3-4, 2PE 3:9 [Yet] God wants all to be saved.

PR 8:13, 16:6 It is the fear of God that keeps men from evil.
1JN 4:18 There is no fear in love. Perfect love drives out fear.
1JN 5:2, 2JN 1:6 Those who love God keep his commandments.

PR 26:4 Do not answer a fool. To do so makes you foolish too.

PR 26:5 Answer a fool. If you don't, he will think himself wise.

PR 30:5 Every word of God proves true.

JE 8:8 The scribes falsify the word of God.

JE 20:7, EZ 14:9, 2TH 2:11-12 God himself deceives people. (Note: Some versions translate deceive as "persuade." The context makes clear, however, that deception is involved.)

IS 3:13 God stands to judge.
JL 3:12 He sits to judge.

IS 44:24 God created heaven and earth alone.
JN 1:1-3 Jesus took part in creation.

IS 53:9 Usually taken to be a prophecy re: Jesus, mentions burial with others.
MT 27:58-60, MK 15:45-46, LK 23:52-53, JN 19:38-42 Jesus was buried by himself.

JE 12:13 Some sow wheat but reap thorns.
MI 6:15 Some sow but won't reap anything.
MT 25:26, LK 19:22 Some reap without sowing.
2CO 9:6, GA 6:7 A man reaps what he sows.

JE 32:18 God shows love to thousands, but brings punishment for the sins of their fathers to many children.
2CO 13:11, 14, 1JN 4:8, 16 God is a god of love.

JE 34:4-5 Zedekiah was to die in peace.
JE 52:10-11 Instead, Zedekiah's sons are slain before his eyes, his eyes are then put out, he is bound in fetters, taken to Babylon and left in prison to die.

EZ 20:25-26 The law was not good. The sacrifice of children was for the purpose of horrifying the people so that they would know that God is Lord.
RO 7:12, 1TI 1:8 The law is good.

EZ 26:15-21 God says that Tyre will be destroyed and will never be found again.
(Nebuchadnezzar failed to capture or destroy Tyre. It is still inhabited.)

DN 5:1 (Gives the title of "king" to Belshazzar although Belshazzar was actually the "viceroys.")

DN 5:2 (Says that Nebuchadnezzar was the father of Belshazzar, but actually, Nabonidus was the father of Belshazzar.) (Note: Some versions attempt to correct this error by making the verse say that Nebuchadnezzar was the grandfather of Belshazzar.)

ZE 11:12-13 Mentions "thirty pieces" and could possibly be thought to be connected with the Potter's Field prophesy referred to in Matthew.
MT 27:9 Jeremiah is given as the source of the prophesy regarding the purchase of the Potter's Field. (Note: There is no such prophesy in Jeremiah.)

MT 1:6-7 The lineage of Jesus is traced through David's son, Solomon.
LK 3:23-31 It is traced through David's son, Nathan.
(Note: Some apologists assert that Luke traces the lineage through Mary. That this is untrue is obvious from the context since Luke and Matthew both clearly state that Joseph was Jesus' father.)

MT 1:16 Jacob was Joseph's father.
LK 3:23 Heli was Joseph's father.

MT 1:17 There were twenty-eight generations from David to Jesus.
LK 3:23-38 There were forty-three.

MT 1:18-21 The Annunciation occurred after Mary had conceived Jesus.
LK 1:26-31 It occurred before conception.

MT 1:20 The angel spoke to Joseph.
LK 1:28 The angel spoke to Mary.

MT 1:20-23, LK 1:26-33 An angel announces to Joseph and/or Mary that the child (Jesus) will be "great," the "son of the Most High," etc., and
MT 3:13-17, MK 1:9-11 The baptism of Jesus is accompanied by the most extraordinary happenings, yet
MK 3:21 Jesus' own relatives (or friends) attempt to constrain him, thinking that he might be out of his mind, and
MK 6:4-6 Jesus says that a prophet is without honor in his own house (which certainly should not have been the case considering the Annunciation and the Baptism).

MT 1:23 He will be called Emmanuel (or Immanuel).
MT 1:25 Instead, he was called Jesus.

MT 2:13-16 Following the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary flee to Egypt, (where they stay until after Herod's death) in order to avoid the murder of their firstborn by Herod. Herod slaughters all male infants two years old and under. (Note: John the Baptist, Jesus' cousin, though under two is somehow spared without fleeing to Egypt.)
LK 2:22-40 Following the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary remain in the area of Jerusalem for the Presentation (about forty days) and then return to Nazareth without ever going to Egypt. There is no slaughter of the infants.

MT 2:23 "And he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: He will be called a Nazarene." (This prophecy is not found in the OT and while Jesus is often referred to as "Jesus of Nazareth", he is seldom referred to as "Jesus the Nazarene.")

MT 3:11-14, JN 1:31-34 John realized the true identity of Jesus (as the Messiah) either prior to the actual Baptism, or from the Baptism onward. The very purpose of John's baptism was to reveal Jesus to Israel.
MT 11:2-3 After the Baptism, John sends his disciples to ask if Jesus is the Messiah.

MT 3:12, 13:42 Hell is a furnace of fire (and must therefore be light).
MT 8:12, 22:13, 25:30 Hell is an "outer darkness" (and therefore dark).

MT 3:16, MK 1:10 It was Jesus who saw the Spirit descending.
JN 1:32 It was John who saw the Spirit descending.

[MT 3:17](#) The heavenly voice addressed the crowd: "This is my beloved Son."

[MK 1:11](#), [LK 3:22](#) The voice addressed Jesus: "You are my beloved Son...."

[MT 4:1-11](#), [MK 1:12-13](#) Immediately following his Baptism, Jesus spent forty days in the wilderness resisting temptation by the Devil.

[JN 2:1-11](#) Three days after the Baptism, Jesus was at the wedding in Cana.

[MT 4:5-8](#) The Devil took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple, then to the mountain top.

[LK 4:5-9](#) First to the mountain top, then to the pinnacle of the temple.

[MT 4:18-20](#), [MK 1:16-18](#) (One story about choosing Peter as a disciple.)

[LK 5:2-11](#) (A different story.)

[JN 1:35-42](#) (Still another story.)

[MT 5:1 - 7:29](#) Jesus delivers his most noteworthy sermon while on the mount.

[LK 6:17-49](#) Jesus delivers his most noteworthy sermon while on the plain. (Note: No such sermons are mentioned in either [MK](#) or [JN](#) and Paul seems totally unfamiliar with either the sermon on the mount or the sermon on the plain.)

[MT 5:16](#) Good works should be seen.

[MT 6:1-4](#) They should be kept secret.

[MT 5:17-19](#), [LK 16:17](#) Jesus underscores the permanence of the law.

[LE 10:8 - 11:47](#), [DT 14:3-21](#) The law distinguishes between clean and unclean foods.

[MK 7:14-15](#), [MK 7:18-19](#) Jesus says that there is no such distinction.

[1TI 4:1-4](#) All foods are clean according to Paul.

[MT 5:17-19](#), [LK 16:17](#) Jesus did not come to abolish the law.

[EP 2:13-15](#), [HE 7:18-19](#) Jesus did abolish the law.

[MT 5:22](#) Anyone who calls another a fool is liable to Hell.

[MT 7:26](#) Jesus says that anyone who hears his words and does not do them is a fool. (Note: The translation now prevalent, "like a foolish man," in [MT 7:26](#) is a dishonest attempt to alleviate the obvious inconsistency here in that the oldest Greek manuscripts use the same Greek word translated "fool" in [MT 5:22](#) and "like a foolish man" in [MT 7:26](#).)

[MT 23:17-19](#) Jesus twice calls the Pharisees blind fools.

[MT 25:2, 3, 8](#) Jesus likens the maidens who took no oil to fools. (Note: This is the same Greek word translated "fool" in [MT 5:22](#) and [MT 23:17-19](#).)

[1CO 1:23](#), [3:18](#), [4:10](#) Paul uses "fool" with regard to Christians becoming fools for Christ. (Note: Again, this is the same Greek word translated "fool" in [MT 5:22](#) and [MT 23:17-19](#).)

MT 5:22 Anger by itself is a sin.
EP 4:26 Anger is not necessarily a sin.

MT 5:22 Anger by itself is a sin.
MT 11:22-24, LK 10:13-15 Jesus curses the inhabitants of several cities who are not sufficiently impressed with his mighty works.
MT 21:19, MK 11:12-14 Jesus curses a fig tree when it fails to bear fruit out of season.
MK 3:5 Jesus looks around "angrily."

MT 5:32 Divorce, except on the grounds of unchastity, is wrong.
MK 10:11-12 Divorce on any grounds is wrong.

MT 5:39, MT 5:44 Jesus says: "Do not resist evil. Love your enemies."
MT 6:15, 12:34, 16:3, 22:18, 23:13-15, 17, 19, 27, 29, 33, MK 7:6, LK 11:40, 44, 12:56 Jesus repeatedly hurls epithets at his opponents.

MT 5:39, MT 5:44 Do not resist evil. Love your enemies.
LK 19:27 God is likened to one who destroys his enemies.

MT 5:39, MT 5:44 Do not resist evil. Love your enemies.
2JN 1:9-11 Shun anyone who does not hold the proper doctrine.
MT 5:43-44, MT 22:39 Love your enemies. Love your neighbor as yourself.
MT 10:5 Go nowhere among the Gentiles nor enter a Samaritan town.
JN 8:58-59 Jesus hid himself, apparently to avoid being stoned.

MT 5:45, 7:21 God resides in heaven.
MK 13:32 The angels reside in heaven
AC 7:55, HE 12:2 Jesus is at the right hand of God, in heaven.
1PE 1:3-4 Believers will inherit eternal life in heaven.
MT 24:35, MK 13:31, LK 21:33 Heaven will pass away.

MT 6:13 God might lead us into temptation and it is better avoided.
JA 1:2-3 Temptation is joy.

MT 6:13 Jesus' prayer implies that God might lead us into temptation.
JA 1:13 God tempts no one.

MT 6:25-34, LK 12:22-31 Take no thought for tomorrow. God will take care of you.
1TI 5:8 A man who does not provide for his family is worse than an infidel. (Note: Providing for a family certainly involves taking "thought for tomorrow.")

MT 7:1-2 Do not judge.
MT 7:15-20 Instructions for judging a false prophet.

MT 7:7-8, LK 11:9-10 Ask and it will be given. Seek and you will find.

[LK 13:24](#) Many will try to enter the Kingdom but will be unable.

[MT 7:21](#) Not everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

[AC 2:21](#), [RO 10:13](#) Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

[AC 2:39](#) Those God calls to himself will be saved.

[MT 7:21](#), [LK 10:36-37](#), [RO 2:6, 13](#), [JA 2:24](#) We are justified by works, not by faith.

[JN 3:16](#), [RO 3:20-26](#), [EP 2:8-9](#), [GA 2:16](#) We are justified by faith, not by works.

[MT 8:5-12](#) The centurion himself approaches Jesus to ask to heal his servant.

[LK 7:2-10](#) The centurion sends elders to do the asking.

[MT 8:16](#), [LK 4:40](#) Jesus healed all that were sick.

[MK 1:32-34](#) Jesus healed many (but not all).

[MT 8:28-33](#) Two demoniacs are healed in the Gadarene swine incident.

[MK 5:2-16](#), [LK 8:26-36](#) One demoniac is healed in this incident.

[MT 9:18](#) The ruler's daughter was already dead when Jesus raised her.

[LK 8:42](#) She was dying, but not dead.

[MT 10:1-8](#) Jesus gives his disciples the power to exorcise and heal...

[MT 17:14-16](#) (Yet) the disciples are unable to do so.

[MT 10:2](#), [MK 3:16-19](#) The twelve apostles (disciples) were: Simon (Peter), Andrew his brother, James the son of Zebedee, John his brother, Philip, Bartholemew, Thomas, Matthew the tax collector, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus (Labbaeus), Simon, and Judas Iscariot.

[LK 6:13-16](#) The above except that Thaddaeus (Labbaeus) is excluded, and Judas the son of James is added (and Judas Iscariot remains).

[AC 1:13, 26](#) Same as [MT](#) and [MK](#) except that, like [LK](#) Thaddaeus (Labbaeus) is excluded, Judas the son of James is included, and Mathias is chosen by the others to replace Judas Iscariot.

[MT 10:2, 5-6](#) Peter was to be an apostle to the Jews and not go near the Gentiles.

[AC 15:7](#) He was an apostle to the Gentiles.

[MT 10:10](#) Do not take sandals (shoes) or staves.

[MK 6:8-9](#) Take sandals (shoes) and staves.

[MT 10:34](#), [LK 12:49-53](#) Jesus has come to bring a sword, fire, and division--not peace.

[JN 16:33](#) Jesus says: "In me you have peace."

[MT 10:22, 24:13](#), [MK 13:13](#) He that endures to the end will be saved.

[MK 16:16](#) He that believes and is baptized will be saved.

[JN 3:5](#) Only he that is born of water and Spirit will be saved.

[AC 16:31](#) He that believes on the Lord Jesus will be saved.

[AC 2:21](#) He that calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved.

[RO 10:9](#) He who confesses with his mouth "Jesus is Lord" and believes in his heart that God raised him from the dead will be saved.

[1JN 4:7](#) He who loves is born of God (and presumably will be saved.)

[MT 10:28](#), [LK 12:4](#) Jesus says not to fear men. (Fear God only.)

[MT 12:15-16](#), [JN 7:1-10](#), [8:59](#), [10:39](#), [11:53-54](#) Jesus hid, escaped, went secretly, etc.

[MT 11:7-15](#), [17:12-13](#) Jesus says that John the Baptist was a prophet, and more.

[JN 1:21](#) John himself says that he is not a prophet, nor is he Elijah.

[MT 11:25](#), [MK 4:11-12](#) Jesus thanks God for hiding some things from the wise while revealing them to "babes." He says that he uses parables so that the meaning of some of his teachings will remain hidden to at least some persons, and specifically so that they will not turn and be forgiven.

[MK 4:22](#) Jesus says that all things should be made known.

[MT 11:29](#) Jesus says that he is gentle (meek) and humble (lowly).

[JN 2:15](#) Jesus makes a whip of cords, drives the money changers from the Temple, overturns their tables, and pours out their coins. (Note: The presence of the money changers in the outer court of the Temple had been authorized by the Temple authorities and was, in fact, a necessity since the Jews would not accept Roman coin for the purchase of sacrifices.)

[MT 12:5](#) Jesus says that the law (OT) states that the priests profane the Sabbath but are blameless. (No such statement is found in the OT.

[MT 12:30](#) Jesus says that those who are not with him are against him.

[MK 9:40](#) Jesus says that those who are not against him are for him.

(Note: This puts those who are indifferent or undecided in the "for him" category in the first instance and in the "against him" category in the second instance.)

[MT 12:39](#), [MK 8:12](#), [LK 11:29](#) Jesus says that he will give no "sign."

[JN 3:2](#), [20:30](#), [AC 2:22](#) Jesus proceeds to give many such "signs."

[MT 13:34](#), [MK 4:34](#) Jesus addresses the crowds only in parables, so that they would not fully understand. He explains the meaning only to his disciples.

[JN 1:1 - 21:25](#) (Throughout the book of John, unlike the other

Gospels, Jesus addresses the crowds in a very straightforward manner. He does not employ parables.)

[MT 13:58](#), [MK 6:5](#) In spite of his faith, Jesus is not able to perform mighty miracles.

[MT 17:20](#), [19:26](#), [MK 9:23](#), [10:27](#), [LK 17:6](#), [18:27](#) Jesus says that anything is possible to him who believes if he has the faith of a grain of mustard seed. All things are possible with God. A mountain can be commanded to move and it will move.

[MT 5:37](#), [15:19](#), [MK 7:22](#), [JN 8:14](#), [44](#), [14:6](#), [18:37](#) Jesus says that you should answer a plain "yes" or "no," that his purpose is to bear witness to the truth, and that his testimony is true. He equates lying with evil.

[JN 7:2-10](#) Jesus tells his brothers that he is not going to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Tabernacles, then later goes secretly by himself. (Note: The words "not yet" were added to some versions at [JN 7:8](#) in order to alleviate this problem. The context at [JN 7:10](#) makes the deception clear, however.)

[MT 16:6](#), [11](#) Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

[MK 8:15](#) Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod.

[MT 16:18](#) Jesus founds his church on Peter and will give him the keys of the kingdom.

[MT 16:23](#) Jesus calls Peter [a] "Satan" and "a hindrance," and accuses him of being on the side of men rather than that of God.

[MT 16:18](#) Jesus founds his church on Peter and will give him the keys of the kingdom.

[AC 15:1-21](#) James presides over the first Council of Jerusalem and formulates the decree regarding the accepting of Gentiles which is sent to the other churches. (Note: Tradition has it that James was appointed as the first Bishop or Pope, not Peter.)

[MT 17:1-2](#) The Transfiguration occurs six days after Jesus foretells his suffering.

[LK 9:28-29](#) It takes place about eight days afterwards.

[MT 20:20-21](#) The mother of James and John asks Jesus a favor for her sons.

[MK 10:35-37](#) They ask for themselves.

[MT 20:23](#), [MK 10:40](#) Jesus responds that it is not his to give.

[MT 28:18](#), [JN 3:35](#) All authority has been given to Jesus.

[MT 20:29-34](#) Jesus heals two blind men on the way to Jericho.

[MK 10:46-52](#) He heals one blind man.

[MT 21:1-17](#) The sequence was: triumphal entry, cleansing of the temple, Bethany.

[MK 11:1-19](#) Triumphal entry, cleansing of the temple.

[LK 19:28-48](#) Triumphal entry, cleansing of the temple, daily teaching in the temple.

[JN 12:1-18](#) Cleansing of the temple (early in his career),

Supper with Lazarus, triumphal entry, no cleansing of the temple following the triumphal entry.

[MT 21:2-6](#), [MK 11:2-7](#), [LK 19:30-35](#) The disciples follow Jesus instructions and bring him the animal (or animals, in the case of [MT](#)).

[JN 12:14](#) Jesus finds the animal himself.

[MT 21:7](#) Jesus rides two animals during his triumphal entry.

[MK 11:7](#), [LK 19:35](#), [JN 12:14](#) Only one animal is involved.

[MT 21:12-13](#) The cleansing of the temple occurs at the end of Jesus' career.

[JN 2:13-16](#) It occurs near the beginning of his career.

[MT 21:19-20](#) The fig tree withers immediately after being cursed by Jesus. The disciples notice and are amazed.

[MK 11:13-14](#), [20-21](#) The disciples first notice that the tree has withered the day following.

[MT 23:35](#) Jesus says that Zacharias (Zechariah) was the son of Barachias (Barachiah).

[2CH 24:20](#) Zacharias was actually the son of Jehoida, the priest.

(Note: The name Barachias, or Barachiah, does not appear in the O.T.)

[MT 24:29-33](#), [MK 13:24-29](#) The coming of the kingdom will be accompanied by signs and miracles.

[LK 17:20-21](#) It will not be accompanied by signs and miracles. It is already within.

[MT 25:34](#) Heaven was prepared before the Ascension of Jesus.

[JN 14:2-3](#) It was prepared after the Ascension of Jesus.

[MT 26:6-13](#), [MK 14:3](#) The anointing of Jesus takes place in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper.

[LK 7:36-38](#) It takes place at the house of a Pharisee in Galilee.

[MT 26:7](#), [MK 14:3](#) The oil is poured on Jesus' head.

[LK 7:38](#), [JN 12:3](#) On his feet.

[MT 26:7](#), [MK 14:3](#), [LK 7:37](#) An unnamed woman does the anointing.

[JN 12:3](#) It is Mary.

[MT 28:6-8](#) The women ran from the tomb "with great joy."

[JN 20:1-2](#) Mary told Peter and the other disciple that the body had been stolen. (Would she feel "great joy" if she thought the body had been stolen?)

[MT 26:8](#) The disciples reproach her.

[MK 14:4](#) "Some" reproach her.

[JN 12:4-5](#) Judas Iscariot reproaches her.

[MT 26:14-25](#), [MK 14:10-11](#), [LK 22:3-23](#) Judas made his bargain with the chief priests before the meal.

[JN 13:21-30](#) After the meal.

MT 26:20-29, MK 14:17-28, JN 13:21-30 Jesus forecasts his betrayal prior to the communion portion of the supper.
LK 22:14-23 After the communion portion.

MT 26:26-29, MK 14:22-25 The order of the communion was: bread, then wine.
LK 22:17-20 It was: wine, then bread.

MT 26:34, LK 22:34, JN 13:38 Peter was to deny Jesus before the cock crowed.
MK 14:30 Before the cock crowed twice.
MK 14:66-72 The cock crows after both the first and second denials.
(Note: These discrepancies have been "translated out" in some Bible versions.)

MT 26:40-45, MK 14:37-41 The disciples fall asleep three times.
LK 22:45 One time.

MT 26:49-50, MK 14:44-46 Jesus is betrayed by Judas with a kiss, then seized.
LK 22:47-48 Jesus anticipates Judas' kiss. No actual kiss is mentioned.
JN 18:2-9 Jesus voluntarily steps forward to identify himself making it completely unnecessary for Judas to point him out. No kiss is mentioned.

MT 26:51, MK 14:47, JN 18:10 The ear of a slave is cut off and left that way.
LK 22:50-51 The severed ear is miraculously healed by Jesus.

MT 26:52 Dispose of swords. All who take the sword will perish by it.
LK 22:36-38 Buy swords.

MT 26:57, MK 14:53, LK 22:54 After his arrest Jesus is first taken to Caiphas, the high priest.
JN 18:13-24 First to Annas, the son-in-law of Caiphas, then to Caiphas.

MT 26:18-20, 57-68, 27:1-2, MK 14:16-18, 53-72, 15:1 Jesus' initial hearing was at night on Passover. In the morning he was taken to Pilate.
LK 22:13-15, 54-66 The initial hearing took place in the morning on Passover.
JN 18:28, 19:14 It took place the day before Passover, on the Day of Preparation.

MT 26:59-66, MK 14:55-64 Jesus was tried by the entire Sanhedrin (the chief priests and the whole council).
LK 22:66-71 There was no trial but merely an inquiry held by the Sanhedrin.
JN 18:13-24 There was no appearance before the Sanhedrin, only the private hearings before Annas and then Caiphas.

MT 26:63, LK 22:70 The high priest asks Jesus if he is the Son of God.
MK 14:61 He asks Jesus if he is the Son of the Blessed.

MT 26:64, LK 22:70 Jesus answers: "You have said so," or words to this effect.

MK 14:62 He answers directly: "I am."

MT 26:69-70 Peter makes his first denial to a maid and "them all."

MK 14:66-68, LK 22:56-57, JN 18:17 It was to one maid only.

MT 26:71-72 Peter's second denial is to still another maid.

MK 14:69-70 (Apparently) to the same maid.

LK 22:58 To a man, not a maid.

JN 18:25 To more than one, "they."

MT 26:73-74, MK 14:70-71 Peter's third denial is to bystanders (two or more).

LK 22:59-60 To "another" (one).

JN 18:26-27 To one of the servants.

MT 26:74 The cock crowed once.

MK 14:72 The cock crowed twice.

MT 27:3-7 The chief priests bought the field.

AC 1:16-19 Judas bought the field.

MT 27:5 Judas threw down the pieces of silver, then departed.

AC 1:18 He used the coins to buy the field.

MT 27:5 Judas hanged himself.

AC 1:18 He fell headlong, burst open, and his bowels gushed out.

MT 27:11, MK 15:2, LK 23:3 When asked if he is King of the Jews, Jesus answers: "You have said so," (or "Thou sayest").

JN 18:33-34 He answers: "Do you say this of your own accord?"

MT 27:11-14 Jesus answers not a single charge at his hearing before Pilate.

JN 18:33-37 Jesus answers all charges at his hearing before Pilate.

MT 27:20 The chief priests and elders are responsible for persuading the people to ask for the release of Barabbas.

MK 15:11 Only the chief priests are responsible.

LK 23:18-23 The people ask, apparently having decided for themselves.

MT 27:28 Jesus is given a scarlet robe (a sign of infamy).

MK 15:17, JN 19:2 A purple robe (a sign of royalty).

MT 27:32, MK 15:21, LK 23:26 Simon of Cyrene carries Jesus' cross.

JN 19:17 Jesus carries his own cross with no help from anyone.

MT 27:37 The inscription on the cross read: "This is Jesus the King of the Jews."

MK 15:26 "The King of the Jews."

LK 23:38 "This is the King of the Jews."

JN 19:19 "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

MT 27:44 Both of those who are crucified with Jesus taunt him.

LK 23:39-42 Only one taunts Jesus, and he is rebuked by the other for doing so.

MT 27:46 Jesus asks God, the Father, why he has been forsaken.

JN 10:30 Jesus says that he and the Father are one.

MT 27:46-50, MK 15:34-37 Jesus' last recorded words are:

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

LK 23:46 "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit."

JN 19:30 "It is finished." (Note: Even though both MT and MK allegedly represent direct quotes and are translated similarly, the actual Greek words used for God are different. MT uses "Eli" and MK uses "Eloi.")

MT 27:48, LK 23:36, JN 19:29 Jesus was offered vinegar to drink.

MK 15:23 It was wine and myrrh, and he did not drink it.

JN 19:29-30 Whatever it was, he did drink it.

MT 27:54 The centurion says: "Truly this was the son of God."

MK 15:39 He says: "Truly this man was the son of God!"

LK 23:47 He says: "Truly this man was innocent" (or "righteous").

MT 27:55, MK 15:40, LK 23:49 The women looked on from afar.

JN 19:25-26 They were near enough that Jesus could speak to his mother.

MT 27:62-66 A guard was placed at the tomb (the day following the burial).

MK 15:42- 16:8, LK 23:50-56, JN 19:38-42 (No guard is mentioned. This is important since rumor had it that Jesus' body was stolen and the Resurrection feigned.)

MK 16:1-3, LK 24:1 (There could not have been a guard, as far as the women were concerned, since they were planning to enter the tomb with spices. Though the women were aware of the stone, they were obviously unaware of a guard.)

MT 24:9 Even some of the disciples of Jesus will be killed.

JN 8:51 If anyone keeps Jesus' words, he will never see death.

HE 9:27 [All] men die once, then judgement follows.

MT 28:1 The first visitors to the tomb were Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (two).

MK 16:1 Both of the above plus Salome (three).

LK 23:55 - 24:1, 24:10 Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and "other women" (at least five).

JN 20:1 Mary Magdalene only (one).

MT 28:1 It was toward dawn when they arrived.

MK 16:2 It was after sunrise.

LK 24:1 It was at early dawn.

JN 20:1 It was still dark.

MT 28:1-2 The stone was still in place when they arrived. It was rolled away later.

MK 16:4, LK 24:2, JN 20:1 The stone had already been rolled (or taken) away.

MT 28:2 An angel arrived during an earthquake, rolled back the stone, then sat on it (outside the tomb).

MK 16:5 No earthquake, only one young man sitting inside the tomb.

LK 24:2-4 No earthquake. Two men suddenly appear standing inside the tomb.

JN 20:12 No earthquake. Two angels are sitting inside the tomb.

MT 28:8 The visitors ran to tell the disciples.

MK 16:8 They said nothing to anyone.

LK 24:9 They told the eleven and all the rest.

JN 20:10-11 The disciples returned home. Mary remained outside, weeping.

MT 28:8-9 Jesus' first Resurrection appearance was fairly near the tomb.

LK 24:13-15 It was in the vicinity of Emmaus (seven miles from Jerusalem).

JN 20:13-14 It was right at the tomb.

MT 28:9 On his first appearance to them, Jesus lets Mary Magdalene and the other Mary hold him by his feet.

JN 20:17 On his first appearance to Mary, Jesus forbids her to touch him since he has not yet ascended to the Father.

JN 20:27 A week later, although he has not yet ascended to the Father, Jesus tells Thomas to touch him.

MT 28:7-10, MT 28:16 Although some doubted, the initial reaction of those that heard the story was one of belief since they followed the revealed instructions.

MK 16:11, LK 24:11 The initial reaction was one of disbelief. All doubted.

MT 28:1-18 The order of Resurrection appearances was: Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, then the eleven.

MK 16:9-14 It was Mary Magdalene, then two others, then the eleven.

LK 24:15-36 It was two, then Simon (Peter?), then the eleven.

JN 20:14 - 21:1 It was Mary Magdalene, then the disciples without Thomas, then the disciples with Thomas, then the eleven disciples again.

1CO 15:5-8 It was Cephas (Peter?), then the "twelve" (which twelve, Judas was dead?), then 500+ brethren (although AC 1:15 says there were only about 120), then James, then all the Apostles, then Paul.

MT 28:19 Jesus instructs his disciples to baptize.

1CO 1:17 Although he considers himself a disciple of Jesus, Paul says that he has not been sent to baptize.

[MK 1:2](#) Jesus quotes a statement that allegedly appears in Isaiah. No such statement appears in Isaiah. (Note: IS 40.3 is seen by some as equivalent to MK 1.2; MA 3.1 is a much better fit, however, given that Jesus is allegedly quoting word for word in MK 1:2.)

[MK 1:14](#) Jesus began his ministry after the arrest of John the Baptist.

[JN 3:22-24](#) Before the arrest of John the Baptist.

[MK 1:23-24](#) A demon cries out that Jesus is the Holy One of God.

[1JN 4:1-2](#) Everyone who confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God. (Note: This would mean that the demon is of God.)

[MK 3:29](#) Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit is an unforgivable sin.

[AC 13:39](#), [CN 2:13](#), [1JN 1:9](#) All sins are forgivable.

[MK 4:11-12](#), [11:25](#) Jesus says that he uses parables so that the meaning of some of his teachings will remain secret to at least some persons. He explains the meanings of the parables only to his disciples. He thanks God for hiding some things from the wise while revealing them to "babes."

[JN 18:20](#) Jesus says that he always taught openly, never secretly.

[MK 6:16](#) Herod was the source of the belief that John had been raised from the dead.

[LK 9:7](#) Others were the source. Herod was perplexed by the belief.

[MK 6:52](#) The people were so unimpressed with "the Feeding of the Multitude" that they did not even understand the event.

[JN 6:14-15](#) They were so impressed that they tried to force Jesus to be their king.

[MK 6:53](#) After the feeding of the 5000, Jesus and the disciples went to Gennesaret.

[JN 6:17-25](#) They went to Capernaum.

[MK 15:25](#) It was the third hour when Jesus was crucified.

[JN 19:14-15](#) It was after the sixth hour since Jesus was still before Pilate and had not yet been sentenced at that time.

[MK 16:1-2](#) The women came to the tomb to anoint the body.

[JN 19:39-40](#) The body had already been anointed and wrapped in linen cloth.

[MK 16:5](#), [LK 24:3](#) The women actually entered the tomb.

[JN 20:1-2](#), [11](#) They did not.

[MK 16:14-19](#) The Ascension took place (presumably from a room) while the disciples were together seated at a table, probably in or near Jerusalem.

[LK 24:50-51](#) It took place outdoors, after supper, at Bethany (near Jerusalem).

[AC 1:9-12](#) It took place outdoors, after 40+ days, at Mt. Olivet.

[MT 28:16-20](#) No mention is made of an ascension, but if it

took place at all, it must have been from a mountain in Galilee since [MT](#) ends there.)

[LK 1:15](#) John the Baptist had the Holy Spirit from before his birth or the birth of Jesus.

[LK 1:41](#) Elizabeth had it long before Jesus went away.

[LK 1:67](#) So did Zechariah.

[LK 2:25](#) So did Simeon.

[LK 11:13](#) It is obtained by prayer (presumably at any time).

[JN 7:39](#), [JN 16:7](#), [AC 1:3-5](#) The Holy Spirit cannot come into the world until after Jesus has departed.

[LK 8:12](#) The Devil causes unbelief.

[MK 4:11-12](#) Jesus is responsible for unbelief in at least some cases.

[2TH 2:11-12](#) God is ultimately responsible for unbelief in at least some cases.

[LK 14:26](#) No one can be a disciple of Jesus unless he hates his parents, wife, children, brothers and sisters.

[1JN 3:15](#) Whoever hates his brother is a murderer.

[1JN 4:20](#) If anyone claims to love God but hates his brother, he is a liar.

[LK 18:9-14](#) Do not boast of your virtue.

[RO 11:20](#), [1PE 5:5](#) Do not be proud.

[RO 15:17](#), [2CO 1:12](#), [HE 3:6](#), [2CO 2:14](#), [5:12](#), [11:17](#) Paul boasts of his faith and says that one should be proud of it.

[LK 22:3-23](#) Satan entered Judas before the supper.

[JN 13:27](#) It was during the supper.

[LK 23:43](#) Jesus promises one of those crucified with him that they will be together, that very day, in Paradise.

[JN 20:17](#), [AC 1:3](#) Jesus was not raised until the third day and did not ascend until at least forty days later.

[LK 23:55-56](#) The women followed Joseph to the tomb, saw how the body had been laid, then went to prepare spices with which to anoint the body.

[JN 19:39-40](#) Joseph brought spices with him (75 or a 100 lbs.) and anointed the body (as the women should have noticed).

[JN 1:1](#), [10:30](#) Jesus and God are one.

[JN 14:28](#) God is greater than Jesus.

[JN 1:1](#) Jesus was God incarnate.

[AC 2:22](#) Jesus was a man approved by God.

[JN 3:17](#), [8:15](#), [12:47](#) Jesus does not judge.

[JN 5:22](#), [5:27-30](#), [9:39](#), [AC 10:42](#), [2CO 5:10](#) Jesus does judge.

[JN 5:22](#) God does not judge.

[RO 2:2-5](#), [3:19](#), [2TH 1:5](#), [1PE 1:17](#) God does judge.

[JN 5:24](#) Believers do not come into judgement.

[MT 12:36](#), [RO 5:18](#), [2CO 5:10](#), [HE 9:27](#), [1PE 1:17](#), [JU 1:14-](#)

15, RE 20:12-13 All persons (including believers) come into judgement.

JN 5:31 Jesus says that if he bears witness to himself, his testimony is not true.

JN 8:14 Jesus says that even if he bears witness to himself, his testimony is true.

JN 5:38-47 Men have a choice as to whether or not to receive Jesus.

JN 6:44 No one can come to Jesus unless he is drawn by the Father.

JN 7:38 Jesus quotes a statement that he says appears in scripture (i.e., the OT).

(No such statement is found in the OT.)

JN 10:27-29 None of Jesus' followers will be lost.

1TI 4:1 Some of them will be lost.

JN 12:31 The Devil is the ruler (or "prince") of this world.

1CO 10:26, RE 1:5 Jesus is the ruler of kings--the earth is his.

JN 12:32 Jesus implies that all persons will be saved.

1TI 2:3-4, 2PE 3:9 God wants all to be saved.

JN 12:40, AC 2:21, 2:39, RO 9:27, 10:13 Some will not be saved.

RE 14:1-4 Heaven will be inhabited by 144,000 virgin men (only?).

JN 13:36 Peter asks Jesus where he is going.

JN 14:5 Thomas does the same.

JN 16:5 Jesus says that none of them have asked him where he is going.

JN 17:12 Jesus has lost none of his disciples other than Judas.

JN 18:9 Jesus has lost none, period.

JN 17:12 Mentions a "son of perdition" as appearing in scripture (meaning the OT).

(Note: There is no "son of perdition" mentioned in the OT.)

JN 18:37 Jesus came into the world to bear witness to the truth.

RO 1:18-20 The truth has always been evident.

JN 20:9 Jesus quotes a statement that he says appears in scripture (meaning the OT). (No such statement is found in the OT.)

JN 20:22 In his first resurrection appearance before the assembled disciples, Jesus gives them the Holy Spirit.

AC 1:3-5, AC 2:1-4 The Holy Spirit was received much later (on Pentecost.)

JN 21:25 The world probably could not contain the books if all that Jesus did were to be written.

AC 1:1 The author of Acts has already written about all that Jesus began to do.

[AC 5:19, 12:6-11](#) The disciples take part in a jailbreak made possible by an angel.

[AC 5:40-42](#) The disciples disobey the Council and continue to teach and preach Jesus.

[RO 13:1-4, 1PE 2:13-15](#) Obey the laws of men (i.e., government). It is the will of God.

[AC 5:29](#) Obey God, not men.

[RO 13:1-4, 1PE 2:13-15](#) Obey the laws of men (i.e., government). It is the will of God.

[AC 9:7](#) Those present at Paul's conversion heard the voice but saw no one.

[AC 22:9](#) They saw a light but did not hear a voice.

[AC 9:7](#) Those present at Paul's conversion stood.

[AC 26:14](#) They fell to the ground.

[AC 9:19-28](#) Shortly after his conversion, Paul went to Damascus, then Jerusalem where he was introduced to the Apostles by Barnabas, and there spent some time with them (going in and out among them).

[GA 1:15-20](#) He made the trip three years later, then saw only Peter and James.

[AC 9:23](#) The governor attempted to seize Paul.

[2CO 11:32](#) It was the Jews who tried to seize Paul.

[AC 10:34, RO 2:11](#) God shows no partiality. He treats all alike.

[RO 9:11-13](#) God hated Esau and loved Jacob even before their birth.

[AC 10:34, RO 2:11](#) God shows no partiality. He treats all alike.

[RO 9:18](#) God has mercy on whoever he chooses, etc.

[AC 16:6](#) The Holy Spirit forbids preaching in Asia.

[AC 19:8-10](#) Paul preaches in Asia anyway.

[AC 20:35](#) Quotes Jesus as having said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (No such statement of Jesus is found elsewhere in the Bible.)

[RO 2:12](#) All who have sinned without the law will perish without the law.

[RO 4:15](#) Where there is no law there is no transgression (sin).

[RO 2:13](#) Doers of the law will be justified.

[RO 3:20, GA 3:11](#) They will not be justified.

[RO 2:15](#) The law is written on the heart. Conscience teaches right from wrong.

[1JN 2:27](#) Anointing by Jesus teaches right from wrong.

[RO 4:9](#) Faith was reckoned to Abraham as righteousness.

[JA 2:21](#) Abraham was justified by works (which made his faith perfect).

[RO 10:11](#) (An alleged OT quote; no such statement in the OT.)

[RO 14:21](#) It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything that might cause your brother to stumble or be offended.

[CN 2:16](#) Let no one pass judgement on you in matters of food and drink.

[1CO 7:8-9](#) Widows should not marry (although it is better to marry than burn).

[1TI 5:14](#) Young widows should marry, bear children, rule the household, etc..

[1CO 8:4](#) There is only one God.

[2CO 4:4](#) Satan is God of this world (therefore there are at least two gods).

[1CO 10:33](#) Paul says that he tries to please men (so they might be saved).

[GA 1:10](#) Paul says he would not be a servant of Christ if he tried to please men.

[2CO 12:16](#) Paul says that he does use trickery.

[1TH 2:3](#) Paul says that he does not use trickery.

[GA 6:2](#) Bear one another's burdens.

[GA 6:5](#) Bear your own burden.

[1TH 2:2](#) God gave Paul the courage to continue his work.

[1TH 2:17-18](#) Satan hindered Paul.

(Note: Who is stronger, Satan or God?)

[1TI 1:15](#) Paul says that he is the foremost of sinners.

[1JN 3:8-10](#) He who commits sin is of the Devil. Children of God do not sin.

[1TI 6:20](#), [2TI 2:14-16](#), [3:1-7](#) Do not argue with an unbeliever.

[2JN 1:10-11](#) Anyone who even greets an unbeliever shares his wicked work.

[CN 4:5-6](#) Be wise in your behavior with outsiders. Let your talk be with grace, mixed with salt, so that you may be able to give an answer to everyone.

[1PE 3:15](#) Always be ready to answer any man concerning your faith.

[JA 4:5](#) (Quotes an alleged OT scripture verse not found in the OT.)

[RE 8:7](#) All of the grass on earth is burned up, and then ...

[RE 9:4](#) An army of locusts, which is about to be turned loose on the earth, is instructed not to harm the grass.

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Common objections to atheism and counter-apologetics

Common objections to atheism and counter-apologetics

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Overview

Categories

With the growing rise of "[new atheism](#)", non-believers have seen an increasing hostility from theists. Common criticisms of atheism and counter-apologetic arguments are made to support the theist's position. These usually fall into one of three categories.

Appeals to emotion

Since the removal of mandatory prayer in American schools, atheism has been the focus of an increased political and media reaction in the form of fear and smear campaigns. These appeals to emotion have been escalating in frequency, coming from politicians such as [Monique Davis](#), who stated that, "It is dangerous for our children to even know that your philosophy exists."

- [Why are you trying to tear down other people's faith?](#)
- [Why can't everyone just have their own beliefs?](#)
- [Why do atheists inspire such hatred?](#)
- [Religious belief is beneficial](#)
- [Hitler was an atheist](#)
- [Stalin was an atheist](#)
- [Mao was an atheist](#)
- [Pol Pot was an atheist](#)

Straw men

The most common argument against atheism and counter-apologetics from the theistic ranks, is probably a straw man depiction of the atheist position. These can range from misrepresentations of

evolution such as leading questions like, "if we came from monkeys, how come monkeys are still around today,"; assertions that science is as much of a religious faith as Christianity; and/or misrepresentations about atheism and secular humanism being synonymous with immorality, communism, and/or mass murder.

- [You are a communist](#)
- [So you believe in nothing?](#)
- [You just want to sin](#)
- [It takes more faith to disbelieve than it does to believe](#)
- [Atheists worship materialism](#)
- [Science is a faith](#)
- [Atheism is a religion](#)
- [Atheism is based on faith](#)
- [The Purpose and Meaning of life](#)
- [Atheists believe that everything is an accident](#)
- [Atheists are just in denial](#)
- [Why are atheists so obsessed with religion?](#)
- [Militant atheists](#)
- [Atheists are angry at God](#)
- [Atheists had a bad experience](#)
- [Atheists are closed minded](#)
- [Atheism depends on evolution](#)
- [Atheists are scared of God](#)

Often, these straw man arguments result in accusations of [atheist hypocrisy](#).

Appeals to solipsism

Perhaps the most interesting of the three categories is the ever increasing problem of appeals to solipsism. The idea that we can't know everything (or anything, depending on how far the arguer wishes to take it), and thus we can never completely rule god out. It constitutes a 'god of the gaps' argument. However, this line of argument raises more questions than it solves if we take this assertion to its ultimate conclusion: i.e. from "we can't know everything," or that, "we can't know anything for certain," yields "how can we claim to know anything about god?"

- [What are your qualifications?](#)
- [God can't be defined](#)
- [Science can't touch god](#)
- [You can't prove God doesn't exist](#)
- [That might be true for you, but its not true for me](#)

- [Religion is another way of knowing](#)
- [Faith is a virtue](#)
- [You'd have to be skeptical of skepticism, ad infinitum](#)
- [Atheists cannot know anything](#)
- [Atheism is meaningless](#)

Related Articles

- [Is Theistic Religion A Consolation?](#)
- [Atheists are immoral](#)

Why are you trying to tear down other people's faith?

"[...] I don't understand why in the world an atheist would go out of their way to disprove God. Christians prove God and we feel better knowing where we are going to go when we die. We feel better when we convert people and help people find God because then they will be in heaven with us too. But for atheists there is no point. It just seems to be that the only point is to maybe have something to fight against or to think they are smarter than we are. [U](#)"

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When will you hear it?

This response will usually come late in a discussion, or as an interpolation in an existing discussion between [atheists](#). It's less of a [counter-apologetic](#) and more of an attempt to steer the conversation away from the evidence for or against positive god claims and toward other personal motives an atheist may have for rejecting such claims. This response is a good sign that your interlocutor finds your words threatening to his or her faith, or to the faith of others.

A response

Tearing down the faith of another person need not be the goal of the atheist. Sometimes, explaining why we do not accept positive god claims, pointing out the harm that can come from belief without evidence, or explaining how we can live full, productive, happy lives without faith is enough to shake the faith of some. We are not responsible for the doubts of the faithful, and

we can't be expected to refrain from reasonable discussion on the topic merely because some people want us to. To do so would present an egregious double standard. Christians do not shy away from explaining their faith for fear of damaging the faith of a Jain or a Hindu or a Muslim. In fact, explaining, arguing for, and propagating faith is generally encouraged within Christianity.

The salient point here is that an atheist most likely does not consider religious faith a benefit. In fact, many atheists view faith as the cornerstone of dogmatism, which is the source of most problems stemming from religion. Most atheists view the loss of faith in superstition as a positive outcome, so atheists should feel no compulsion to refrain from discussion of god claims and their effects on society.

Possible rebuttals

The theist might interject that people find great comfort in their faith. Although that may be true, such comfort does not imply that faith produces true beliefs or productive behaviors. A drunk will find comfort in a bottle of whiskey and a drug addict in a syringe full of heroin, yet there are good reasons to help both these people to overcome these addictions. In fact, the original question can be easily paralleled to "Why are you such a buzzkill?" uttered by a drunk from whom you take the bottle. A reasonable response is that if faith can be broken through rational argument and evidence, then it was likely misplaced to begin with.

You can point to the fact that psychologists have named Denmark, a relatively secular country, as the happiest place on Earth [1]. This provides evidence that religion is unnecessary for happiness. You can point to the harm caused by religion. For example, a partner in an abusive marriage often is pressured to stay with his or her abuser because of Christian opposition to divorce. You can also point out that atheist websites focus attacks primarily on fundamentalist Christians instead of on liberal Christians, who do relatively little harm.

References

1. [↑](#) the camo christian, [why atheism doesn't make sense](#), 11 Sep 2016

Why can't everyone just have their own beliefs?

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- [1 Overview](#)
- [2 Limits of Belief](#)
- [3 Harm by Religious Belief](#)
- [4 Problem of Casual Theistic Beliefs](#)

Overview

A common objection to [atheist](#) activism is that atheists are attempting to disallow theists from having their [beliefs](#). The atheist is often asked, "*Why can't everyone just have their own beliefs?*" Many [theists](#) assert that their beliefs are harmless, and, most of the time, they are indeed harmless. This objection arises due to a few misunderstandings:

- Atheists aren't attempting to ban theistic beliefs, per se. Most of the time, addressing theistic beliefs is a means of self-defense against actions of theists.
- Most of the time, the people who make this claim aren't the ones directly harming society. Atheists are generally addressing actions of the more extreme theists.

Limits of Belief

While everyone necessarily has their own beliefs, not all beliefs are equally valid, nor do they equally reflect [reality](#). An incorrect belief may occasionally be harmless, but it can also directly result in negative consequences. Pointing out the fallacious reasoning behind such beliefs need not be seen as "harsh" or "offensive". If someone is so insecure in his or her beliefs as to be unable to handle criticism, these beliefs probably lack a rational foundation.

Beliefs inform your actions, and if your beliefs are in error, your actions are more likely to be harmful in some way. While people obviously can hold whatever beliefs they want, it is healthier for society as a whole if those beliefs are accurate. If faith is the basis for one's beliefs and is what determines agency in the world, then we should strive to hold beliefs that are accurate.

Harm by Religious Belief

The following is a list of harm caused by religious beliefs. This counters the idea that theistic beliefs are harmless.

- [God won't allow global warming, because he promised not to flood us again](#), thus sabotaging our efforts to stem the climate issue.
- [God won't let us run out of resources](#) - thus contributing to more destruction of the planet, and the avoidance of action that would better our condition.
- [Son dies slowly as parents pray](#), in spite of having an easily treatable ailment.
- [The Crusades](#), where religion prompted a group of Christian knights to slaughter anyone in the way of securing the holy land.

- [The Spanish Inquisition](#), where draconian and barbaric measures were taken to ensure people stayed within the Catholic church.
- [Uganda Anti-Homosexuality Bill](#), which is religion-driven legislation that would jail or put to death homosexuals.
- [September 11, 2001](#), where faith-driven Islamic terrorists flew airplanes into the WTC, killing over 3000 people, over promises of martyrdom.
- [Catholic Anti-contraceptive efforts](#), which leads to an increased spread of STDs in Africa, and thus death, because the [Catholic](#) church is opposed to sexual activity.
- The psychological damage that excessive fundamentalist indoctrination can do to one's ability to have intimate and professional relationships.
- [The unfounded and paralyzing fear of hell for minor actions, such as critical thinking.](#)
- [The systematic deconstruction of science education in America.](#)
- The brainwashing of children into thinking they are worthless sinners, which destroys their self esteem.
- [Mother kills child during exorcism attempt](#)

Problem of Casual Theistic Beliefs

Casual theists (such as liberal [Christians](#)) contribute indirectly to many of the atrocities above. Even though most theists aren't responsible for such atrocities, their presence helps to establish an environment sympathetic to religiously motivated actions likely to cause harm. Just as a damp basement is an environment more conducive to mold growth than a dry basement, a society infused with casual theistic belief is an environment more conducive to dangerous theistic actions than a society without religious beliefs.

What are your qualifications?

This is the [fallacy](#) of arguing that if someone has not received formal education in a particular topic, he or she is not allowed to present criticisms on that topic of interest. It is essentially an [ad hominem](#) attack and a defence of their view by an [argument from authority](#).

This question represents a fallacy because information is legitimate or illegitimate regardless of whether the individual reporting it is an expert or authority. Although an expert likely knows more about a given subject, may be more likely to be correct unfounded assertions, and may be more believable, information itself does not rely on an authority for its legitimacy. Therefore, whether an individual is presenting valid criticisms of an idea depends not on his or her qualifications, but on his or her information and reasoning.

"He has attended no Bible college, taken no home Bible study courses, does not teach a Sunday School class, has not even taken first-year, basic Hebrew or Greek. [\[1\]](#)"

"Now hold on—are you the person who understands the officially codified doctrine of Islam? You're the interpreter of that? [\[2\]](#)"

"Do I have an expert knowledge of the three languages (Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic) in which the Bible was originally written? Do I have a clear grasp of the context in which each book was compiled? Do I have a correct understanding of every passage and of the sense in which the writer used words or numbers? Can I in every case identify the author's use of language, so that I can determine whether he was employing metaphor or hyperbole, or using a simile or a localized idiom? [...] Any individuals who can truthfully answer 'Yes' to all of these questions [...] may feel qualified to press on with their attack. If not, surely it would be wiser-and humbler-to try a different approach. [\[3\]](#)"

Setting the bar for prior knowledge at an unreasonably high level is [Loki's wager](#).

Many Muslims believe that the [Qur'an](#) requires extensive training for correctly interpretation.

References

1. [↑ \[1\]](#)
2. [↑](#) The Young Turks, [Ben Affleck Angrily Defends Islam Against Bill Maher/Sam Harris](#), 6 Oct 2014
3. [↑](#) John Blanchard, Why believe the Bible?, 2004

Atheists believe in nothing

[Theists](#) often respond to assertions of [atheism](#) with the question, "So you believe in nothing?" Such a question not only patently mischaracterizes the nature of atheism, but it betrays one of the inherent problems in Christian [doctrine](#): the potential for development of a type of "Christian [nihilism](#)," in which adherents see all meaning and value as derived only from [God](#).

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Guidelines not needed

This question is similar to accusations that [atheism is immoral](#) since it lacks guidelines dictated from a "higher power." Therefore, asking this question essentially implies that humans are incapable of independent and complex thought, a concept debunked in numerous examples worldwide. Consider the fact that many [Buddhists](#), despite having complex systems of [dogma](#) and [spiritual](#) beliefs, are atheists by definition because they reject the concept of god in any monotheistic sense. While some schools of Buddhism differ from this interpretation, there are many Buddhists practicing what they view as a rich and complex religion, while asserting that their beliefs and dogma come not from a divine authority.

Secular atheism

How, then, is a secular atheist fundamentally different from a non-theistic Buddhist who doesn't believe in God, yet clearly doesn't believe in *nothing*? Countless schools of philosophy serve as a basis for development of secular belief. Consider (secular) [existentialism](#), which revolves around the concepts of self-discovery and finding meaning and value relevant to one's own life and worldview. Many philosophers and self-described existentialists have written works detailing quite complex systems of [epistemology](#) (in a sense, "What can we know?"), [morality](#), and more, without ever involving God.

Whether or not atheists describe themselves as existentialist, the framework of existentialism shows how one may find belief, meaning, and value in a purely secular way, outside the bounds of any defined religion.

Theistic responses

Theistic Response: Atheism anticipates Relativism

A theist could respond by saying that any attempt at finding belief, meaning, and value apart from the existence of God will inevitably result in a vicious relativism, where meaning and value are contingent and are not necessary or absolute. Although this line of reasoning does not necessitate belief or direct knowledge of a transcendent Christian God, it does raise the issue of the lack of objective, [absolute](#) determining criteria for meaning and value. Even within the framework

of existentialism, one must either consent to the existence of an absolute moral guideline (i.e., God) even if one does not adopt a particular religion, or one must admit there might not be any absolute, objective and necessary values and meanings. (The first side or the theists in question would have to prove to begin with their claim that there really exists such a thing as [absolute morality](#) - "True purpose" for every being; in case they succeed in this part, they still have to properly demonstrate what this essential meaning factually is, not just resort to personal opinions of what one wants it to be.)

Christianity as contingent

Incidentally, [Christianity](#) is a contingent belief system and [Christian morality](#) is a contingent moral system because different Christians, different Christian sects, different Christian cultures, different Christian nations, Christians at different times in history, etc., have interpreted matters of [faith](#) and morality differently.

Another way of putting this is that Christian beliefs and Christian morality are contingent on individual interpretations or on the interpretations of any given sect, culture, nation, time in history, etc.

You are a communist

"**You are a communist**," is an attack occasionally directed at an atheist by a theist. This claim is an example of an [ad hominem](#), wherein one attacks the personal character of his or her debate partner, instead of attacking the arguments presented. Therefore, even if the atheist in question *is* a communist, it has relatively little bearing on the questions of theism/atheism. In the US, this association is largely the result of cold war propaganda that contrasted the "free, capitalist West" with "atheistic, communist Russia". ^[1]

"Are Communist Atheists & are Atheists Communists? Are there any differences between both groups are are they both the same thing? [2]"

There is no evidence supporting the claim that most atheists are communists. An atheist can simply ask the offending theist to define the term "communist", and then point out ways in which he or she differs from the communist socialist movement. A primary point to consider is that atheism and theism are metaphysical philosophies, whereas communism is a political ideology; communism cannot be demonstrated to follow necessarily from atheism. Unlike communists, most atheists do not seek to ban religion but they do often support [secularism](#).

If, for the sake of argument, we accept that most communists are atheists, it does not follow that most atheists are communists. This is the logical fallacy known as "[affirming the consequent](#)."

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Communists are atheists?

The argument references the fact that communist regimes are often nominally atheist. For instance, China has introduced [religious tests](#) to ensure their power is not undermined by organised religion. However, this does not show that *all* or *most* atheists are communists.

A similar argument is to make the accusation that [Stalin was an atheist](#), which is of questionable accuracy.

Various communist writers have stressed that atheism is a necessary part of communism. However, it is questionable if the population generally shares this view. Chinese culture has been strongly influenced by [Chinese folk religion](#), [Confucianism](#), [Taoism](#) and [Buddhism](#). There are also tens of millions of [Christians](#) in China. Most people in Soviet Russia were [Orthodox Christians](#).

Most communists are atheists vs. most atheists are communists

The argument proceeds as follows:

1. If P, then Q.
2. Q.
3. Therefore P.

In this case:

1. If someone is a communist, then he or she is likely an atheist.
2. I am an atheist.
3. Therefore I am likely a communist.

This argument is invalid because statement three can be (and often is) false, even granting as true statements one and two. We could consider another example that should make it clear to the theist that the argument holds no weight:

1. If someone refuses blood transfusions on religious grounds, he or she is likely a theist.
2. I am a theist.
3. Therefore, I am likely to refuse blood transfusions on religious grounds.

If a theist makes the claim, "You are a communist," and will not subsequently concede the invalidity of the claim, discussions with him or her are unlikely to be fruitful. You may wish to question whether further discussions with this person on the topics of atheism and theism are necessary or productive.

See also

- [Jesus was a communist](#)
- [Liberation theology](#)
- [Stalin was an atheist](#)

References

1. [↑](#) [\[1\]](#)
2. [↑](#) [\[2\]](#)

Why do atheists inspire such hatred?

The question, "**Why do atheists inspire such hatred?**" was the on-screen title of a televised discussion segment^[1] hosted by [Paula Zahn](#), which aired on [CNN](#) on Jan 31, 2007. The discussion followed a prerecorded piece^[2] about two atheist families who say they were discriminated against because of their beliefs (or lack thereof).

The segment

The panelists, all of whom were theists (two [Christians](#) and a [Jew](#)), included:

- [Karen Hunter](#), identified as a "Pulitzer Prize winner"
- [Debbie Schluskel](#), "Atty. & conservative columnist"
- [Steven A. Smith](#), "ESPN analyst"

The questions asked by Zahn in the segment were:

1. So, do you think atheists should keep their religious beliefs secret?
2. Are any of you [panelists] going to defend them here tonight?
3. What happened to "[love thy neighbor](#)" and that we should be able to practice [free speech](#)?
4. How do you believe they [atheists] are imposing their beliefs?
5. When you look at the statistics that [atheists are the most hated of all the minorities](#), above gays... [Okay, not a question, but a comment. All the panelists seemed not to believe the statistics were accurate.]
6. Can you explain to me where you feel the assault, when [97% of the folks in this country claim to worship some kind of god](#), so you have 1 to 3 percent of this population that doesn't believe in God — who are they hurting?

Although some reasonable statements were made, each panelist raised several points that were clearly incorrect or misleading, or based on various [fallacies](#). The following remarks are paraphrased in many cases, but try to adhere to the intent of the speakers.

Points raised by Karen Hunter

- [Atheists believe in "nothing"](#).
- "When does it end? I mean, we [took prayer out of schools](#). What else do they want?"
- Atheists don't have good [PR](#) or marketing.
- If atheists had "[Hallmark cards](#)", maybe they wouldn't feel so left out.
- Atheists "need to shut up" and "let people do what they do", and "stay in their [place]" [the actual word used is not intelligible, but the meaning is clear from the context].
- Atheists are "[crying wolf](#)" all the time".
- Taking prayer out of schools left a lack of [morality](#) in schools.
- Prayer was "taken out of schools" because "an atheist went to court". [In fact, regarding the two most relevant [Supreme Court](#) cases, [Engel v. Vitale](#) involved nine parents of students in New Hyde Park, New York, and

the case [*Abington Township School District v. Schempp*](#) was brought by a [Unitarian Universalist](#) resident of Abington Township, Pennsylvania.]

- If you don't want prayer in school, then don't pray.
- You can't pick an atheist out of a crowd. [True, but presented as an argument against the statistics that indicate atheists are the "most hated of all the minorities".]
- According to the latest [Harris poll](#), [nonbelievers constitute about 8 to 12 percent of the population](#).
- Atheists aren't hurting anyone, and I don't personally have any problem with atheists.
- Atheists shouldn't "[impose on my rights](#)" to have prayer in schools, say the [Pledge of Allegiance](#), or honor my God.

Points raised by Debbie Schlusel

- [Atheists discriminate against those who are religious](#) [more than the other way around].
- [America is a Christian nation](#).
- Atheists don't complain about cases of religion in school settings when the religion being promoted is [Islam](#).
- Atheists are "the [intolerant](#) ones".
- [Freedom of religion](#) does not mean [freedom from religion](#).
- "Obnoxious" [Michael Newdow](#) took his [Pledge of Allegiance](#) case to the Supreme Court, while his child [on whose behalf the case was brought] "didn't know what was going on". [In fact, Newdow won in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals, so it was the school district who appealed the case to the Supreme Court.]
- In [Europe](#), there are more atheists, they have "lost God", and "the Church is not that strong".
- "Europe is becoming [Islamist](#), it's fast falling, and intolerance is increasing."
- The United States has not become "like Europe" because "we have strong Christians, and because atheists are not strong".

Points raised by Steven Smith

- You are entitled to believe what you want, as long as you aren't imposing your beliefs on other people. [The first reasonable argument presented in the discussion.]
- Atheists mainly encounter problems in "[red states](#)", not in places like [New York City](#).
- [Everyone I know loves the Lord](#).
- Atheists don't "need to shut up" because "there's a whole bunch of people in this world that we can look at and say they need to shut up, and they certainly don't". [An odd argument, to be sure.]
- I don't believe that [atheists are the most hated minority](#) group.
- Atheists want to take "[under God](#)" out of the Pledge of Allegiance, saying that's a Christian thing, but what if you're a [Muslim](#)? What if you're somebody of a different belief? If we're "inclusionary", why don't we include all things? But we're not, and that's my point. [The exact argument being presented here is not clear, but it should be pointed out that while the phrase "under God" was originally supposed to refer to the Christian god, in fact [Jews, Muslims and Christians all worship the same god](#).]

During the latter stages of the discussion, a wall-sized monitor in the background was displaying the question, "Are atheist tactics too [militant](#)?"

Discussion

As pointed out by [Matt Dillahunty](#) on [The Non-Prophets](#), instead of "Why do atheists inspire such hatred?", the question should have been phrased, "Why do some people hate atheists?"

Atheism doesn't "inspire" hatred. In fact, atheism doesn't have anything to do with hatred or love, war or peace. It is simply rejection of theist claims.

Some atheists do in fact unleash "hate" against theists, but that is not part of the "teachings" of atheism (mainly because there are no teachings), and such atheists are not acting on their "atheist beliefs" (i.e., the lack of belief in any gods) but upon other beliefs separate from, but perhaps compatible with their atheism.

On the other hand, one could easily turn the question around and ask, "Why does *religion* inspire such hatred?" This question not only makes more sense than the original one, it has several possible answers:

1. Indoctrination
2. Religious forms of nationalism
3. Divisiveness and sectarianism
4. Competition
5. Prejudice

Religion has spread a lot of hate not only around the globe, but also down the generations. Not only are atheists targeted, but other theists who do not share the beliefs of other theists. (In fact, the minority theist group is often labeled as "atheists" by the dominant one.)

That's not my God

Skeptics sometimes base their arguments on an attribute or property of God that is assumed for the same of argument. **That's not my God** is a defensive apologetic response which points out an opponent is using a definition or conception of God that the theist does not share. The apologist essentially accusing the critic of making a [straw man](#) argument. In some cases, the apologist may be justified in their defense. In other cases, the apologist may be shifting the goal posts.

"Atheists ridicule magic, miracles and an anthropomorphic God. They remind us that the world is not 6,000 years old, that prayer does not cure cancer, and that there is no heaven or hell. But these are not thoughts. They are self-evident tautologies. These two camps never step outside their narrow intellectual boundaries. The atheists belief they know religions' inadequacies, although they have never investigated religious thought. They delight in critiques that are, to any first year seminarian, shallow and stale."

— [Chris Hedges, I Don't Believe in Atheists](#)

"Simply put: there is no such thing as the God he imagines. It is the flying teapot orbiting a distant planet about which nothing can be said. Such a God doesn't exist. Nilch. Nada. It's a nonsense. ^[1]"

People have a wide variety of beliefs about God. Arguably, [Christians disagree with each other on every point of dogma](#). Confusion and misunderstandings may be avoided by finding out what a specific theist personally believes.

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Counter arguments

There are various common ways to redefine God to avoid a skeptics arguments. However, attempting to redefine God often raise other [problems and contradictions](#).

Reducing omniscience

As Stephen Maitzen argues, removing or reducing [omniscience](#) does not reduce the responsibility of a being that can intervene in suffering or immoral acts [but doesn't](#). If this being couldn't predict the behavior, but still could be aware of it once it began, the responsibility is the same.

If the being is not able to be aware of all suffering, or to intervene in all cases, then what else can't this God do? Can we be assured of heaven or any brighter future? What good does our acknowledgment of this God accomplish? How does it differ from simply being aware of our planet and fellow beings and working together with them?

Explanation for non-action

If the reason for non-action from God is to teach a lesson, either to an immoral person or for someone who is observing the immoral action or even helping to relieve it, but falling short, that's actually worse. This makes God more of a moral monster than if I could accept that He has a higher purpose that I can't comprehend. This is a version of the [Divine command theory](#).

Or as Neale Donald Walsch argued in *Conversations with God*, God could do anything but he could not experience separation from Himself, so he created the physical universe. We are living out that separation, experiencing all that comes with that separation and slowly finding our way back towards the oneness. It sounds nice until you start thinking about the resulting suffering including millions of horrible tortuous deaths of creatures for millions of years.

Criticism of religion may address common but not universally held beliefs

Critics of religion are sometimes accused of addressing puerile, crude or [strawmen](#) arguments for the existence of God. However, criticism may address a widely held belief without necessarily applying to all possible variants of religious belief. To insist that it does is [Loki's wager](#). Theologians and clerics often have more sophisticated beliefs which are not normally addressed by secular apologetics.

"Polls consistently show that around 70-80% of Americans believe in the existence of Heaven, Hell, Satan, and angels. And let's not even discuss whether the majority of Muslims think of Allah as a "ground of being" rather than as a disembodied ruler who tells them how to behave. [2]"

Of course, when discussing religious beliefs, critics should not simply assume a theist holds a particular interpretation of religion.

Free will

[Free will](#) is a common panacea for logical and ethical problems for God. [Fundamentalism](#) will offer a very small amount of it and more [liberal christians](#) will grant much more. But they can only grant so much. Our free will has to be limited to decisions that are beneath the abilities of God or God becomes unnecessary. But, if God's knowledge remains so far beyond ours that we can't understand it, then how do we evaluate it? If we can't evaluate it, how do we know we are not being led by an evil being? Statements of God being good will always require an [a priori](#) statement of its goodness. (Common fallacious arguments involving [Begging the question](#), such as saying "the god of my religion is good because he says so, and he wouldn't lie because he is good", don't count as a reasonable argument; the same goes for ones based on [Circular reasoning](#), such as saying "Scriptures claim to be the word of a perfect god and they really are so, as they cannot tell lies

because they are the word of this perfect god, who is proven to exist through these divinely accurate scriptures saying so.")

Decreasing God's power reduces it to nothing

Either increasing our knowledge of good and evil or reducing God's knowledge and abilities to the point where we can understand them, to a point where we can be confident that we can make moral judgments opens up the question of the [morality](#) of any action. If earthquakes and tornadoes are necessary for creation then God is not all powerful. Either God can command you to sacrifice your children, or you can override that command on moral grounds that you can describe using [formal logic](#).

This is the line. Either we have the ability to determine what is right and how to live our lives, or God has complete power over us. Anything in between is a god that may or may not be getting it right. Above the line, where God's powers are beyond our knowledge and comprehension, all of the standard arguments apply. Below the line, in a deistic, pantheistic world where God or gods are subject to laws that we can comprehend, or even if god is a race of intelligent super-aliens, arguments are based on a human level of understanding of cause and affect and are essentially no different than an atheist worldview.

References

1. [↑](#) ^[1]
2. [↑](#) ^[2]

External links

[Atheism and the Basis of Morality, Stephen Maitzen](#)

[How the problem of evil uncloaks Christianity's total moral bankruptcy, Martin Wagner](#)

That's not in my Bible

(read this article in [French](#))

Many [Christians](#) are not familiar with large sections of the [Bible](#); therefore, such Christians have not have noticed some of its more peculiar or more abhorrent passages. There are many occasions of [God commanding atrocities in the Old Testament](#). The Bible contains absurd laws that are virtually impossible to follow. Theists may express disbelief that such things are in the Bible because of their lack of familiarity with sections that are downplayed by their religion.

The best way to counter this argument is to show the person the relevant passage. There are several web sites and books that list questionable passages in the Bible.

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1_Absurd laws
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Absurd laws

There are many laws in both the [Old](#) and [New Testaments](#) that are almost impossible to follow and are ignored by Christians. Some highlights include:

- injunction against wearing clothes of wool and linen ([Deuteronomy 22:11](#) 📖)
- resist not evil [Matthew 5:39](#) 📖

Rape

According to Deuteronomy, the punishment for [raping](#) a woman who is not engaged is restitution of fifty-pieces of silver to the woman's father, and the rapist is required to marry the woman.

([Deuteronomy 22:28](#) 📖) Divorce is prohibited, ([Deuteronomy 22:29](#) 📖) and the woman has no right to divorce. If a man rapes a woman who is engaged, both the rapist and the woman are to be stoned to death; the rapist for violating another man's property, and the woman because she did not cry out for help. ([Deuteronomy 22:23-24](#) 📖)

Rape is encouraged as a military tactic throughout the Bible, which sanctions the raping of virgin women as prizes of war.

Atrocities

In the Old Testament, [Yahweh](#) told the [Israelites](#) to exterminate any tribes in the area he had [promised to give them](#). This was followed by a long series of atrocities that were [directly commanded by Yahweh](#).

For instance: at Jabesh Gilead, ([Judges 21:10-12](#) 📖) Israelites kill all of the men and non-virgin women. They take four-hundred virgin women back to their camp, implying that those women were raped.

Human Sacrifice

According to the [Bible](#), the [Abrahamic God](#) apparently approves of [human sacrifice](#).

- Binding of [Isaac](#) ([Genesis 22:1-24](#) 📖). Although [Abraham](#) is commanded by God to sacrifice Isaac at the mountaintop, and is willing to do so, an angel sent by God intervenes at the last moment. There is a corresponding story in Islam, which credits the son as [Ismail](#) instead of Isaac.
- Jephthah ritually sacrifices his daughter to God ([Judges 11:29-40](#) 📖) after vowing to sacrifice the first thing that greets him when he returns from his military victory over the Ammonites.
- After the Israelites violate God's commandments, God commands Joshua to instruct the people in ritual repentance, which includes the destruction by fire of those who violated the covenant. ([Joshua 7:15](#) 📖) It is ambiguous as to whether this is ritual sacrifice performed by the tribe or whether it is performed directly by God.
- Jeroboam prophesies that [Josiah](#) will sacrifice pagan priests who use shrines to God. ([1 Kings 13:2](#) 📖) Josiah later executes them, and burns their bones. ([2 Kings 23:20](#) 📖)

Counter arguments

Christians usually claim the [Old Testament](#) does not apply to them since the arrival of [Jesus](#). Their justification for the [selective use of the Old Testament](#) is questionable. It also does not explain their [selective use of the New Testament](#).

External link

- [The Skeptic's Annotated Bible](#)
- [Bible Study Tools](#)
- [Biblegateway](#)

They're not true Christians

"They're not *true* Christians," is a phrase oft-uttered among [Christian apologists](#) to "disown" examples of self-proclaimed Christians who have committed acts widely condemned as [immoral](#). This claim is typically raised when religion is blamed for [atrocities or causing social harm](#).

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Counter arguments

No true Scotsman

Main Article: [No true Scotsman fallacy](#)

One may ask, where is the line between "true Christian" and "not a true Christian"? Clearly, some immoral acts are far worse than others, and it is widely recognized among practicing Christians that we are all flawed and prone to "sin". When does a self-described Christian cease to become a "true" Christian through tendencies they widely recognize as part of our human nature? According to [Biblical definition](#), lying is immoral, yet it is quite difficult to find a single person who has never told a lie. Even assuming this to be a "[forgivable](#)" immoral act, one can invoke myriad other acts, from infidelity to theft, that we know are perpetrated by many self-described Christians.

The claim, "Such-and-such immoral people are not true Christians," seems to be based on a poorly formed notion of what is necessary to be a Christian. Without definitional clarity, it is easy for an apologist to commit the type of faulty reasoning commonly referred to as the "[no true Scotsman fallacy](#)". This is when a person, as part of a group, attempts to differentiate himself or herself from actions of another group member by arbitrarily defining the group such that it excludes that member. An example would be the assertion by a Scotsman, upon seeing another Scot playing a saxophone, "No true Scotsman would choose to play a saxophone!" The error here is that the traits actually defining one as a Scotsman include being born on Scottish soil, or being born into the Scottish culture, or being of Scottish ancestry; the type of instrument one plays has no bearing on this status. Similarly, a Christian is a Christian because he or she believes that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God who came to Earth and died to atone for the sins of humanity. Whether one is a good person or a bad person is independent of this belief, as behavior is clearly not the characteristic that defines Christians as Christians.

"Evil" atheists

Frequently, the same Christians who use this phrase will also criticize [atheism](#) for lack of moral oversight, often even going so far as to point out immoral atheists or supposed atheists in an effort to extrapolate to [atheism as a whole](#) -- a form of flawed [inductive reasoning](#). Furthermore, it may be argued that they are committing the fallacy

of [special pleading](#), wherein apologists hold themselves to a different standard than those with whom they disagree, as they define "true Christians" as those who never commit immoral acts. Often, such apologists ignore the large number of atheists with outspoken dedication to moral principles, either informally or through adherence to schools of thought such as [Humanism](#). Clearly, such a statement merely serves to whitewash Christianity as a bastion of morality, while juxtaposing the supposed dangers of atheism and the [atrocities it may bring](#).

Intellectual honesty requires atheists to acknowledge that there are some immoral atheists. Likewise, intellectual honesty requires Christians to acknowledge that there are some immoral Christians. Ultimately, this common retort to atheism only [distracts](#) from the question under consideration, which is whether there is reason to believe positive claims for the existence of a God.

See also

- [Atheism is immoral](#)
- [Religion is harmful](#)
- [You were never a true Christian](#)

You just want to sin



For more information, see the Atheist Debates video on [Y'all just want to sin](#).

Theists who accuse [atheists](#) saying "**you just want to sin**," are suggesting that the atheist fears living with the moral requirements that come with religious belief. It is related to the accusation that [atheists are just in denial](#), with the added implication that the denial is driven by hedonistic desires. This assertion is easy to counter.

"Although few would admit it, our rejection of religious and moral truth is often on volitional rather than intellectual grounds—we just don't want to be held accountable to any moral standards or religious doctrine."^[1]

The argument can be used for [poisoning the well](#):

"The well known atheist and Jesus myth proponent Richard Carrier recently admitted to being polyamorous. This means that he has openly admitted to having sexual relationships with multiple people at the same time. This admission and Carrier's lifestyle have implications for his historical Jesus scholarship. This admission now gives Carrier a reason to find Jesus as a myth."^[2]

Counter arguments

"[Apologists] don't offer any evidence of this. And they ignore the actual merits of our position. And attempt to back up this entire dismissal by appealing to scripture, which is of course circular. I've been accused of this many times and I know they are wrong because I know why I am not a believer. I didn't set out to find some excuse for my sin. I didn't set out to get out from under the yoke of God."^[3]

This is not really an argument to begin with. [Sin](#) plays no role in people's atheism. The theist cannot reasonably deny your claim, as he or she has no access to your inner motivations.

"Although the most acute judges of the witches and even the witches themselves, were convinced of the guilt of [witchery](#), the guilt nevertheless was non-existent. It is thus with all guilt."

— [Friedrich Nietzsche](#)

The notion of sin is not universal among all theists or deists. For instance, you could well choose to be a deist, while still giving yourself the leeway to sin.

If maximizing hedonistic pleasure is the goal of an atheist, this desire would form a poor basis for him or her to reject a theistic religion that promises

eternal bliss. After all, is an [eternity of bliss](#) not more hedonistic (pleasure-maximizing) than several decades of “sin”?

Equally facetious assertion can be made against apologists. Examples include, "You're not a Muslim because you just want to draw pictures of people," or “You’re not Amish because you just want to accumulate worldly possessions.”

Theists commit behaviors that various theistic traditions widely regard as sinful (e.g., excessive consumption of alcohol, cheating, theft, premarital sex, etc.). Of course, this fact does not invalidate arguments for theism, but it does point out that many forms of theism and “sin” are apparently compatible. In fact, the [Protestant Christian](#) religion holds that [faith alone earns one a place in Heaven](#); no strict moral codes required!

One last thing to point out that this accusation seems to be analogous to a gang of thieves planning a heist in a zone continuously patrolled by (preferably competent) police officers, agreeing on "not believing" in the existence of said law-enforcers to be able to steal the goods without any hindrance. After all, if the non-theist truly believed deep inside that an omnipotent deity does exist and is watching, how would not believing in the existence/power of said deity actually hamper its ability to punish those who sin?

Even if God existed, [the scriptural God is unworthy of worship](#).

See also

- [Atheists know there is a God](#)

References

1. [↑ I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist](#)
2. [↑ \[1\]](#)
3. [↑ \[2\]](#)

Atheists know there is a God

[Theists](#) claim that the existence of [God](#) is so axiomatic that nobody can deny God. Atheists do not really exist, since they are simply suppressing their knowledge of God. Rather than actually providing [proof](#) or valid argument for their God claims, they resort to claiming that the [evidence](#) is all around us. Others may claim that we already know God because He created our [souls](#) and gave us life, or that God is a part of each of us. Christians, for instance, often cite [Romans 1:20](#) 📖 "*The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; that they are without excuse.*" Basically, the claim is that the evidence for God's existence is so clear that to deny it or fail to accept it is inexcusable. Based on this assumption, theists may try to paint atheists as hypocrites by claiming that all atheists merely *pretend* not to believe in God.

"I don't believe there is any atheists, ok."

— Si Robertson ^[1]

"Disbelief is always, at some level, a conscious and sinful act.^[2]"

"Darwinian biologists must keep repeating that reminder to themselves because otherwise they might become conscious of the reality that is staring them in the face and trying to get their attention.^[3]"

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Counter apologetics

God does not obviously exist

It is not axiomatic, obvious, or self-evident that there is a God. Most or all atheists have no experience of "knowing God" or any feeling of suppressing such knowledge. Rather, it seems the theist who makes this argument is blinded by his or her own faith-based beliefs. He or she may be under the delusion that because such [beliefs](#) of self-evidence are so cherished by the individual, they must also be universally experienced in the minds of every human on Earth. Unfortunately for the theist and the atheist alike, there is no way to know what any given

human *actually* thinks or believes, so this argument depends on a great deal of [wishful thinking](#).

The claim that "atheists know there is a God" is probably both non-verifiable (at least given the current state of medical science) and [non-falsifiable](#). Indeed, any attempt to verify if an atheist believes or not in gods (polygraph, FMRI, etc.) with a negative result could be construed as either a failure of the equipment to detect deceit, [or as deception](#) by [Satan](#), or any other [ad hoc/post hoc](#) explanation. The efficacy of polygraph tests has been questioned, and evidence against their reliability as a tool for the detection of deceit has led to their inadmissibility in many courtrooms. This aside, the theist who is claiming the atheist knows there is a God likely has no reliable, accessible means by which to substantiate their claim.

If a God would be expected to provide evidence of their existence or reasons to believe in him, the [lack of evidence is itself](#) an argument against the existence of God.

Reversible argument

An atheist could simply turn this accusation around and claim, "Theists know there is no God. In fact, everyone is born with the knowledge that we are just a natural product of the universe!" A responsible atheist should make no such assertion, as both the "God exists" and "God does not exist" forms are equally indefensible. Of course, this assertion's main purpose is not "proving" the lack of existence of gods, even less giving factual data about what people really think, but simply serving as a reverse-argument that is, logically speaking, just as valid and sound as the apologist's argument. If it is easy to spot the ludicrousness in the claim "You know that universal invisible sky pixies exist, but you just pretend not to believe," it should be easy for a theist to recognize that arguing about the inner thoughts of an atheist likewise is obnoxious.


Scriptural arguments



For more information, see the [Skeptic's Annotated Bible](#) article:

[*Who forces non-believers to disbelieve?*](#)

As for appeals to Bible verses like [Romans 1:20](#) 📖 (cited above), such appeals represent a fallacious argument called the [argument from scripture](#). Besides, relying on religious scripture [does not tell us which specific scripture to use](#); using Bible verses is just as valid to Christians as using verses from the Koran is to the Muslim. For instance, a Christian can deny [Allah](#) all he or she wishes, but according to the [Koran](#), they are without excuse. The Primordial Covenant in Islam states that

Allah created our souls and we all have testified that he is our God before we were even born ([Surah 7:172-174](#) : "*When thy Lord drew forth from the Children of Adam -from their loins- their descendants, and made them testify concerning themselves, (saying): "Am I not your Lord (Who cherishes and sustains you)?" They said: "Yea! We do testify!: (This), lest ye should say on the Day of Judgment: "Of this we were never mindful;" or lest ye should say: Our fathers before us took false gods.)* It is common for religions to include a system that links all human beings as being created by a specific creator and claims humans are without excuse for disbelieving. There is no clear way do determine [which gods](#) are real and which are imaginary. Thus, the presentation of any single one of these systems is not particularly impressive to the atheist.

Atheists know there is evidence for God

Some apologists insist that Atheists should admit there are strong arguments and evidence for God:

"Every atheist knows that there is evidence for God. There are reasons to believe in the resurrection of Christ. There's much strength in the traditional arguments for theism. ^[4]"

While evidence exists, it is weak and unreliable. There is also similarly uncertain evidence that God does not exist. Many people are therefore [agnostic](#) and suspend judgement until better evidence becomes available. Others consider the evidence too weak to support theism and become [atheists](#).

Arguments for God's existence are psychologically appealing but often give rise to [absurd](#) and [contradictory](#) conclusions. Most rely heavily on the [argument from ignorance](#) or other logical flaws. Scriptures contain serious [historical problems](#). Many arguments imply some original or first entity but give no indication as to its characteristics - for instance we cannot tell if it divine or not. It is therefore difficult to say they provide much certainty.

See also

- [Argument from divine sense](#)
- [Presuppositional apologetics](#)
- [Argument from nonbelief](#)

References

1. [↑](#) ^[1]
2. [↑](#) ^[2]

It takes more faith to disbelieve than it does to believe

It has been suggested that this article be merged with [Atheism is based on faith](#)

[Atheists](#) maintain that there is currently no [evidence](#) to justify positive belief in [God](#). Therefore, it is not necessary, [logical](#), or reasonable to [believe](#) in any of the various gods posited by world religions. The absence of evidence could represent either evidence of absence or simply the absence of a proper means of detection. Regardless, positive claims about the existence of gods made in the absence of evidence are difficult to defend. Belief is warranted when the existence of a god can be demonstrated [beyond a reasonable doubt](#). For the purposes of this discussion, the relevant definition of faith is:

"Accepting a proposition as true based on intuition or reason, regardless of the evidence."

A separate issue is that, in general, it seems [believing requires less psychological effort than disbelieving](#).

Counter Apologetics

When there is not sufficient evidence to support a claim, the default position should be rational skepticism if the goal is to minimize the number of false beliefs and maximize the number of true beliefs one holds. A central problem of faith is that if it can form a reasonable basis for believing one proposition without evidence, why does it not also form a reasonable basis for believing a contrary proposition? By what means can faith be discerned to lead to true beliefs, when it can be used with equal effectiveness to support conflicting propositions? One cannot argue that faith claims can be rationally evaluated *in any way whatsoever* to demonstrate their truth, because once faith claims are rationally considered against alternative hypotheses, the claims are either 1) no longer held (in favor of an alternative claim) or 2) no longer based on faith (i.e., rationality forms the basis for the claim). Atheists maintain that there is no strong evidence for the presence of a higher power, which is why theists need faith -- to replace evidence. Ironically, many theists have the confidence to deny the existence of fairy tale creatures from other mythologies and cultures, and deities of other religions, for which there is likewise no strong evidence.

Not believing in fairies or Father Christmas is not an act of faith, because those who are making these claims have the [burden of proof](#), and must provide evidence to support the acceptance of such propositions. Technically, disbelief of a claim, when evidence is lacking, requires less a statement of [faith](#), in the same sense that 0 is less than 1. Definitionally, it doesn't make sense to say that disbelieving "takes more faith," as it doesn't require any faith not to place one's belief in unsubstantiated truth claims. An analogous claim would be, "Not playing sports requires more athletic ability than playing football." However, when discussing

the faith required to be an atheist, it is helpful to point out that two basic forms of atheism exist, and each could be described as requiring different degrees of faith:

- [weak \(or default\) atheism](#) - the position of atheists who simply fails to accept propositions for the existence of a god; requires no *faith* because no claims are accepted as true without evidence. The weak atheist, therefore, does not accept that absence of evidence for a god is evidence of absence.
- [strong atheism](#) - the position of atheists who believe actively that there is no god; requires more *faith* because the positive claim that there are no gods is accepted as true without evidence. The strong atheist, therefore, accepts that absence of evidence for a god is evidence of absence.

An atheist may wish to bring up this distinction to derail the "Atheism is a kind of faith" argument, as most consider themselves weak/default atheists. Some theists, such as [Ray Comfort](#), may try to make the claim that this category is actually [agnostics](#), as they usually represent strong atheism as the standard atheist position. One can point out that atheism categorically is, *without belief in any gods*, and that both definitions of atheism fall within this broader category. If the theist refuses to accept the self-applied label of atheist, then the atheist can suggest that the theist is making a distinction without a difference, and that moving on with the conversation is likely more productive than further semantic arguments (Careful however, as the theist might use their [subjective definition](#) to formulate strawman arguments later).

A final point the atheist could consider is that religions assert that [faith is a virtue](#), so it hardly makes sense to criticize the atheist for having as much faith as, or more faith than, the theist. A reasonable question to directly follow the theist's objection to this would be, "Does faith prove me wrong?" (as in "Does basing a viewpoint on faith invalidate it automatically?") If the answer is "yes," the theist is either admitting their beliefs are not faith-based, or that they are wrong according to this reasoning. If the answer is "no," the theist is admitting that faith doesn't distinguish between the truth of his or her beliefs and the beliefs of the atheist.

Related Pages

- [Atheism is based on faith](#)
- [Atheism is a religion](#)

God doesn't believe in atheists

The slogan "[God](#) doesn't believe in [atheists](#)" is a rhetorical tactic. It is neither a rational conclusion nor an argument in support of one.

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Counter-arguments

God is not omniscient

The retort, "God doesn't believe in atheists," could be interpreted to mean that the god under consideration does not know about the billions of people who don't believe he exists. Regardless of the faith of the theist, this statement implies that his or her god is not [omniscient](#). Further, it implies that the theist believes himself or herself to know the limits of God's mind. Is the theist omniscient?

Atheists are lying

Main article: [There are no atheists](#).

This claim can also be interpreted to mean, "Atheists secretly believe that there is a god, and God, who is omniscient, knows this." It comes across as dismissive and ignorant when used against an atheist who truly doesn't believe in any gods.

If the theist believes the atheist must be lying, does he or she also insist that every person of every other faith secretly believes in the correct god (i.e., his or her own god), yet worships the wrong god? For instance, if the theist is Christian, does he or she believe that two-thirds of other people on the planet are lying about their beliefs? Why just the atheists?

Similar Arguments

The atheist can point out that an equally facile slogan would be, "Batman doesn't believe in people who don't believe in Batman." This should illustrate that the structure of the slogan makes for a silly claim.

Another response for the theist might be, "Vishnu doesn't believe in people who don't believe in Vishnu." This, of course, does not impress the theist unless he or she is Hindu. One could point out that atheists treat all such claims like the theist (if he or she is not Hindu) treats the Vishnu claim--with dismissal.

Science is a faith

Science is a faith is a statement that reflects a [straw man](#) or [equivocation](#) fallacy propagated by apologists to attempt to discredit "belief" in science as being no more sound than belief in God. Science does contain philosophical underpinnings which are unprovable, which thus require "faith" in the epistemological sense. However, science distinguishes itself from purely faith-based beliefs in the same way that philosophy does; by the application of logic. Science also goes one step further by adhering to demonstrable, repeatable experiments and empirical data.

Furthermore, the statement indirectly generates a [false dilemma](#) by positioning science as "the dogma of the atheist" and as a tool to attack religious believers. Science is neither the dogma of the atheist nor a tool to attack theists; two examples that illustrate this are an individual who does not believe in god but performs a daily ritual to summon good luck, and an individual who does believe in God yet nonetheless follows the scientific method in his or her research. Science simply is not synonymous with atheism.

"Darwinists have no answer, only faith."^[1]

"The greatest empiricists among us are only empiricists on reflection: when left to their instincts, they dogmatize like infallible popes. When the Cliffords tell us how sinful it is to be Christians on such "insufficient evidence", insufficiency is really the last thing they have in mind. For them the evidence is absolutely sufficient, only it makes the other way. They believe so completely in an anti-Christian order of the universe that there is no living option: Christianity is a dead hypothesis from the start."^[2]

Development of Scientific "Beliefs"

Most respected scientific papers, which introduce new concepts into widespread discussion, are [peer-reviewed](#). Peer review is the process by which scientists in the relevant field are tasked with judging the study detailed in the paper for soundness of experimental design, data analysis, and conclusions. A critical requirement for a paper to pass peer-review is that the study must be described such that it can be replicated easily by a scientist wishing to subject the conclusions to another test. In this way, other scientists can either repeat or challenge the work that produced controversial findings. Over time, scientists can amass evidence, confirm hypotheses, and eventually refine theories. Claims that scientists make, therefore, are necessarily supported by developed systems of logic and reason applied to available evidence. Anyone with the resources to replicate an experiment or the intellectual capacity to critique conclusions is free to do so. This leads to a continual challenging of the status quo and the development of a more complete and nuanced understanding of our world. Faith is not a tool of science, as faith does not promote greater understanding of the world in this same way.

The value of inquiry without faith can be demonstrated easily in the modern world. The reliable performance of so many of our modern technological conveniences depends on the repeatability of scientific findings. For example, modern telecommunications technologies, which use the exchange of "packets" of encoded information over a multitude of media from wireless technology to fiber optics, is able to relay complex information thousands of miles around the world in a way that can be decoded by a recipient within seconds. The rapid delivery and high fidelity of such data are not dependent upon *faith* but upon repeatable phenomena discovered and manipulated using a rigorous, evidence-based approach. Is a cell phone powered by faith? Of course not!

Religious Beliefs

Religious beliefs generally are maintained solely on the basis of faith. For example, the Christian evangelical who promises a potential convert a paradise after death has no means to demonstrate his or her claims, and is simply banking on the goodwill and faith of his or her target. Such faith is unhelpful in discerning what is true about the world. The faith that leads to growing numbers of evangelicals is not demonstrably different from the faith that leads to the growth of Mormonism, Islam, or any of a number of other religions.

Can faith, as a means of knowledge-seeking, be demonstrated to reveal truths about the world? No, of course not; whether the beliefs of the faithful are likely to be correct depends not on the rigor or quality of his or her faith. In contrast, scientific inquiry reveals many more truths about the world than the faith of any believer. Whether the evidence-based beliefs of an investigator are correct depends on the rigor or quality of the evidence available. This difference in approach leads to a striking juxtaposition in effectiveness for these alternative means of developing beliefs. The difference in efficacy between faith and scientific inquiry is trivial to demonstrate--just point to the advances in knowledge and technology of the past century!

References

1. [↑ I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist](#)
2. [↑ \[1\]](#)

Atheism is a religion



For more information, see the Atheist Debates video on [Science and intellect are your gods!](#).

[Apologetists](#) frequently assert that **atheism is a religion**. Whether this is true or not depends greatly on what definitions of [atheism](#) and [religion](#) are being used. The argument is most effectively made against [strong atheism](#), in which positive assertions are made that no gods exist, but even in that case there are real problems with applying the label of religion to something that is explicitly denying a central belief of almost all religions. Further muddying the issue is the purely [legal](#) notion that, for the purposes of the [First Amendment](#)'s [free exercise clause](#), atheism should be considered a form of religion worthy of protection.

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Apologetics

If you truly [believe](#) that there is no [god](#), how is that different from believing that there is a god? Both are positions on a fundamentally religious question that must ultimately rest on [faith](#). Therefore, atheism is just another form of religion.

Counter-apologetics

Non-differentiating Definitions

- Frequently, atheism is equated to religion by using **non-differentiating definitions**, meaning, aspects of a concept that do not distinguish the concept from others, are used for comparison.

For example:

- Religion is a group of people.
- Atheists are a group of people.
- Therefore, atheism is a religion.

Now that religion is based on groups of people, everything from baseball teams to people sitting in a waiting room, are now religions. Few would find the argument compelling: "*Oranges are made of matter. Stars are made of matter. Therefore, oranges are kinds of stars.*" Whether something is

made of matter is not what *distinguishes* a star from a non-star. Other non-distinguishing comparisons that commonly come up:

- Getting together in groups / socializing
- Having a set of beliefs
- Having tax-exempt status
- Having **a** belief about gods
- Voicing our concerns/opinions ("proselytizing" or "evangelizing")

While most religions do these things, they aren't religions *because* of these aspects - but rather by a set of attributes that *distinguish* it from other concepts, such as belief in supernatural events or beings.

Additional Counter-Apologetics

- "If I'm not buying what you're selling, it doesn't mean I'm selling something else."
- According to [dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com), the primary definition of *religion* is:
 1. *a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe, esp. when considered as the creation of a superhuman agency or agencies, usually involving devotional and ritual observances, and often containing a moral code governing the conduct of human affairs.*
- There's a lot of wiggle room in those "especially"s and "usually"s. Does atheism (strong or not) consider the [universe](#) as a [creation](#) of superhuman agency? Of course not; just the opposite (in that atheists do not believe in such a superhuman agent in the first place). Must atheism in all cases involve devotional and ritual observance? No. Must atheism in all cases prescribe a [moral](#) code? No. Of course, there are systems of morality that atheists would be comfortable calling their own (see the article on [secular morality](#)), but atheism in itself does not suggest which moral system one should follow.
- More to the point, is atheism a set of beliefs concerning the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe? No. Atheism is a *lack* of **one specific belief**, not a set of beliefs. Even strong atheism is simply a position on one particular issue: there is no god. Thus, even assuming strong belief in this point, that doesn't say anything at all about the actual cause, nature or purpose of the universe, except in the negative ("it's not God").
- People who think that atheists are all of one mind about the nature of the universe need only consider the beliefs of [Raelians](#) to see this is not so.

- Some people claim that atheism is a religion based on later definitions of the word, such as:
*something one believes in and follows devotedly; a point or matter of ethics or conscience:
[for example] to make a religion of fighting prejudice.*

Technically, atheism could be considered a religion in this sense, but this wanders very far from what [theists](#) imply when they call atheism a religion, and can thus be considered [equivocation](#). As the entry itself mentions, under this definition "fighting prejudice" is a religion. If this is true, then so are [capitalism](#), [football](#), and [Star Trek](#). It is surely not much of an insult to be included under such a broad definition. (On the other hand, many religious people would likely be insulted if this were taken to be the *only* meaning of the term when applied to *their own* religion!) Atheism would be a religion in the same sense that golf is a religion but not in the sense that [Catholicism](#) is a religion.

- If atheism is a religion, then... (or: Atheism is a religion like...)
 - ...not collecting stamps is a hobby.
 - ...not playing golf is a sport.
 - ...not believing 13 is unlucky is a superstition.
 - ...bald is a hair color.
 - ...nudity is an outfit.
 - ...off is a TV station.
 - ...being healthy is a disease.
 - ...abstinence is a sex position.
- Tu quoque! This argument exists to defend religion by claiming that atheists fall into the same category. This serves to derail the argument and prevents focusing on the lack of evidence for the religion. Beyond shifting the burden of proof, the argument serves as a non-sequitur.

Dissolving the Question

Words are hidden inferences. By calling atheism a religion, the person wants to come to some conclusion using a syllogism such as:

1. Religions force people to wear silly hats.
2. Atheism is a religion.
3. Therefore, atheism forces people to wear silly hats.

These syllogisms don't work. Humans have ten fingers; but if I lose a finger in a chainsaw accident, I am still a human.

Since you are talking about a very specific instance, there's no need to go through the generalization for any specific questions about atheism. However, this might have come

up when the atheist in the conversation made a point about religion. In this case, talk about the specific aspect of religions that fits your argument, and stop using the word 'religion' (or synonyms). For example, when saying that religion is harmful, you might want to switch to saying that dogmatic movements are harmful -- an argument that might exclude a small number of religions and include some political movements used in dictatorships.

See also

- [Atheism is based on faith](#)
- [Christianity is not a religion](#)
- [Islam is not a religion](#)

External links

- [Is atheism a religion?](#) by Adrian Barnett
- [Atheism: Just Another Religion?](#) by The Thinking Atheist podcast

Atheists worship materialism

Rebuttal

[Atheism](#) and [materialism](#) are responses to different philosophical questions; either view can be held independent of the other. Therefore, atheism and materialism are not mutually inclusive ideas that stand hand in hand as a single ideological position. Being an atheist does not necessitate being a materialist, and being a materialist does not necessitate being an atheist.

Definitions

To fully explore the notion that "[atheists](#) worship [materialism](#)," the three words of the statement need to be defined.

An 'atheist', in the broadest sense, is a person who lacks belief in any form of [deity](#); To 'worship' is to show reverence and adoration for (a deity) or to honor with [religious](#) rites; and 'Materialism' can mean one of the following:

- 1) a tendency to consider material possessions and physical comfort as more important than [spiritual](#) values,
- 2) the [doctrine](#) that nothing exists except matter, and that everything in existence depends on material processes acting on this matter, *or* the doctrine that consciousness and will are wholly due to material agency (philosophical materialism).

Using these definitions, the expression 'atheists worship materialism' is clearly ill-conceived, as the terms 'atheism', 'worship' and 'materialism' have meanings that do not together construct a coherent claim. 'Atheism', being the simple absence of a belief in a deity, generally excludes the practice of worship. As a philosophical position, materialism is not well-suited as a recipient of worship, since worship is a practice directed toward deities, not philosophies. Materialism has multiple meanings, and serves as both an economic and metaphysical construct.

Atheism and materialism

It is true that atheists are often, though not always, sympathetic to the materialistic worldview. This likely is because immaterial phenomena are not demonstrable, and therefore are unsupported by available evidence. Some atheists may pragmatically accept only material explanations because to invoke immaterial explanations has been an epistemological dead end. Such atheists are likely to remain [agnostic](#) on whether there exists immaterial aspects to the universe. Others may commit to the philosophical position that matter is all that exists in the universe, because *to exist* requires the property of materiality. Such atheists are expressing a more positive claim by committing to metaphysical materialism. These are two different conceptions of materialism, neither of which lends itself to worship.

Many atheists reject materialistic explanations for the nature of the universe. This is wholly consistent, as atheism and materialism are not philosophically dependent on one another, and an individual can advocate for one without the other. For example, Thomas Nagel, the academic philosopher and author of *Mind and Cosmos*, is both an atheist and an anti-materialist.

Hypocrisy of celebrating religious holidays

This argument may be used by a theist to criticize [atheists](#) or those of different [faiths](#) for celebrating a holiday based on a faith not their own. The argument does not actually address beliefs about the nature of reality, and instead focuses a personal attack on the atheist or person of a different faith. This is the logical fallacy of the [ad hominem](#), whereby one attempts to undermine the truth of a conclusion based not on evidence or reason, but by a personal attack on the holder of the conclusion. As such, It doesn't serve a productive purpose in a sincere discussion and should be called out as irrelevant to any question of the existence of gods.

Counter-apologetics

It may be useful to point out that, for atheists, the holiday in question is not celebrated for its religious values, and that the holiday also is not recognized by the government for its religious values. It is difficult to argue that an atheist is hypocritical for taking a holiday off, when society-at-large recognizes it as a day traditionally taken off from work and school. It is obvious that the widespread celebration of Christmas is as much a cultural/secular celebration as a religious one. To be a hypocrite on this matter, an atheist would have to both reject the Christian narrative of Jesus, while annually pretending during December to believe it for personal gain. However, since Christmas is celebrated without regard for personal beliefs about the existence of Jesus, no such hypocrisy is necessary or prevalent among atheists.

It is important to point out that a number of major religious holidays have been scheduled to co-opt existing holidays of other religions, such that the new religious tradition claims the day for itself. Both Christmas (see [The sun in religion](#)) and Easter are old pagan celebrations subsequently claimed by Christianity.^{[\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)} Just as a pagan holiday was co-opted by Christians, a Christian holiday has been co-opted by society-at-large. Many pagan elements are still celebrated by religious believers, such as Easter eggs, the Easter bunny and Halloween.

Another thing to point out is that we regularly denote the passage of time based on religious mythology we no longer accept. For example, the name *Thursday* originally celebrated the Norse God of thunder, Thor. In fact, every day of the week originally was a celebration of a Roman, Norse, or pagan god. The names of months, too, often have similar mythological origins. Are we hypocritical to recognize such days and months when we no longer hold such beliefs?

References

1. [↑ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmas#Pre-Christian_background](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christmas#Pre-Christian_background)
2. [↑ http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2010/apr/03/easter-pagan-symbolism](http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2010/apr/03/easter-pagan-symbolism)
3. [↑ http://www.thercg.org/books/ttooe.html](http://www.thercg.org/books/ttooe.html)

Atheism is based on faith

[Apologists](#) often claim that **atheism is based on faith** — that is, not believing in a [god](#) requires just as much [faith](#), if not more, than belief. [Norman Geisler](#) expressed this argument in the title of his book, *[I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist](#)*.

"To be a [sic] Atheist one would have to be omniscient, knowing all things, having a perfect knowledge of the universe, to say they absolutely know God does not exist. For one to do this they would have to personally inspected all places in the present known universe and in all time, having explored everywhere seen and unseen. ^[1]"

"Atheism is a faith in that which has not been proved.^[2]"

"If God is outside of nature, then science can neither prove nor disprove His existence. Atheism itself must therefore be considered a form of blind faith, in that it adopts a belief system that cannot be defended on the basis of pure reason."

— [Francis Collins](#), *[The Language of God](#)*

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- 1 [Counter-apologetics](#)
- 2 [See also](#)
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- 4 [External link](#)

Counter-apologetics

- The definition of "Atheist" in the argument above is an overly broad [straw man](#): an atheist is one who either [lacks positive belief in a god](#) or who [believes that no gods exist](#), not one who claims to know absolutely that no gods exist (see [Atheist vs. agnostic](#)).
- While a person would need perfect knowledge of the universe to be [absolutely certain](#) that no gods exist, such knowledge is not required for *disbelief*. And, in fact, individual theists disbelieve all kinds of claims (that various mythical beings exist, or that Earth is being regularly visited by aliens from space) without having complete knowledge even of the relevant subject areas.

- The use of the word "faith" is often an attempt to mislead based on the [equivocation](#) fallacy. As the article on [faith](#) discusses, the two primary meanings of the word are: (1) *confident belief in the truth, value, or trustworthiness of a person, idea, or thing*; and (2) *belief that does not rest on logical proof or material evidence*. One may reasonably claim that certain forms of atheism are based on "faith" using the first definition. However, the way this claim is often made implies that the second definition is being used, which is usually incorrect.
- Disbelief based on lack of evidence does not require faith. In fact, disbelief does not require evidence of any kind. Someone who has never heard of the concept of "gods" would not believe in them. Under the broader definition of atheism, they would be an atheist and yet not have faith that no gods exist. Similarly, someone who has been given evidence and simply finds it lacking (the classic narrower definition of *atheist*) would also not be relying on faith for his or her lack of belief.
- It is quite possible to obtain evidence discouraging belief in the existence of specific gods (i.e., "evidence-based atheism"). For example, if the god is defined sufficiently well, one may examine the definition for logical contradictions. If the god is [not logically consistent](#), then disbelief is justified. If a god is invoked to explain a certain phenomenon, then that explanation can be compared to the best scientific explanation of the same phenomenon. If [science](#) leads to a better explanation or a deeper understanding of the mechanisms involved, then [why is belief in the god necessary?](#)
- The argument equates non-belief in a proposition due to a [complete lack of evidence and good reasons to suppose otherwise](#) to the psychological leap of faith needed to believe such a proposition.
- Theists tend to treat belief in their particular god as the default position, and they will often back this up with some variation of the [argument from design](#). But since theists make a positive claim of their god's existence, they have the [burden of proof](#). In fact, their claim is [quite extraordinary](#) (e.g., a being that can create whole universes), so their burden of proof is all the greater for that.
- There is often an unspoken premise in this kind of argument that being an atheist is dangerous and therefore should not be entered into lightly. This is a classic [appeal to emotion](#). (Not to mention the ironic implication that faith is not

a good reason to *disbelieve* something; if that's true, then why should faith be a good reason to *believe* something?)

- Theists commonly consider faith to be a virtue. It seems odd, then, that they would criticize atheism for being based on faith. Moreover, the argument implies that the more faith a proposition needs, the less one should accept it as true, a position that many counter-apologists would welcome.
- [Tu quoque!](#) This argument attempts to defend faith-based religious claims by insisting that the atheist position falls into the same category. It also often serves as a [non sequitur](#), and tends to derail the discussion about the merits of positive god claims.
- Theists often backslide and have trouble maintaining faith in their god. Atheists occasionally convert to theism, but do not tend to slip into various god-beliefs due to the "strain" required to maintain no belief in any gods. If atheism were an identity based on faith, one might expect atheists to share the same difficulties the religious have in maintaining their faith.

See also

- [Atheism is a religion](#)
- [Atheists believe something came from nothing](#)

References

1. [↑](#) ^[1]
2. [↑](#) ^[2]

External link

- [Myths About Atheism: Must Real Atheist Know Everything to Deny God? at \[atheism.about.com\]\(#\)](#)
- [Atheists don't need faith, any more than we need religion](#)

Religious belief is beneficial to society

(Redirected from [Religious belief is beneficial](#))



For more information, see the [Skeptic's Annotated Bible](#) article:

[Good Stuff in the Bible](#)

Religious belief is sometimes justified by the fact it brings benefits to society or significant subsections of it, sometimes including non-believers. This claim is often made regardless of the actual existence of God. Evidence cited includes: religious people and institutions help the needy, or created great works of art or science.

If the argument is extended to draw the conclusion that God exists, it is an invalid conclusion because it is an [appeal to consequences](#).

The opposing view is that [religion is harmful to society](#). This article focuses on the broad social effect of belief to society. Religious belief is also said to [bring psychological benefits to the believer](#).

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Examples

Religious people are more generous

The positive link between religiosity and charity is perhaps the best evidenced positive outcome.

"The differences in charity between secular and religious people are dramatic. Religious people are 25 percentage points more likely than secularists to donate money (91 percent to 66 percent) and 23 points more likely to volunteer time (67 percent to 44 percent). And, consistent with the findings of other writers, these data show that practicing a religion is more important than the actual religion itself in predicting charitable behavior. For example, among those who attend worship services regularly, 92 percent of Protestants give charitably, compared with 91 percent of Catholics, 91 percent of Jews, and 89 percent from other religions. ^[1]"

"Religion, Bloom points out, does actually seem to make people more altruistic and generous. Religious people give more to charities than non-religious people, including secular charities. ^[2]"

"The fact that people are inspired to heroic acts of kindness by the teachings of Christ says nothing about the wisdom or necessity of believing that he, exclusively, was the Son of God"

— [Sam Harris](#), [The End of Faith](#)

Reduces crime

"a large body of solid research shows... a positive effect of religion on reducing crime, deviance, and delinquency—often a very strong effect. ^[3]"

Religious belief is associated with a reduced crime. (However, religiosity is associated with *increased* violent crime. ^[4] ^[5])

Religion as social glue

Main Article: [Religion is the social bond in society](#)

In animal species that live together as groups, certain anti-social behaviours are controlled and suppressed to maintain the cohesiveness of the group. Many non-human animals exhibit pre-moral tendencies of fairness and reciprocity. Religion may have emerged as an evolutionary means to enhance group cohesion by supposing the existence of supernatural beings that monitor individual behaviour.

"Finally, since religion is a community-based enterprise, it largely discourages disengaged individualism. While this has its hazards -- lock-step conformity, tribalism, narrow-mindedness, etc. -- it does promote social integration among its members and that is generally good for psychological functioning. The religions we have with us today did not just drop from the sky, they evolved, with a primary selection criterion being how well they created trusting, cooperative groups motivated for collective action. The motivations they employ and the actions they engender may be good or bad from an outside perspective; but, by and large, being part of a tight-knit social group is psychologically beneficial for its members."

— Matt J. Rossano, [Why Religion Is Not Delusion](#), Huff Post, 06/23/10

Societal improvements

Apologists also point to societal improvements by religious thinkers:

"The reformation of British society in the 19th century (and many similar phenomena elsewhere in the world throughout history) through such moves as the abolition of slavery, child labour, child prostitution, prison reform and the establishment of schools and hospitals through the work of Wilberforce, Booth, Fry, the Clapham Sect and others was largely the result of the evangelical revival of the 18th century and lends strong support to the existence of a redemptive supernatural God who changes and shapes human lives and societies. [6]"

"On a wider scale, no identifiable group of human beings has had a more positive impact on their contemporary culture than those who have been motivated and directed by the Bible. They have founded countless schools, hospitals and charitable institutions [...]. [7]"

"The abolished the slave trade and freed the slaves, and they improved the conditions of workers in mills and mines and of prisoners in gaols. They protected children from commercial exploitation in the factories of the West and from ritual prostitution in the temples of the East. [...] They seek in whatever way they can to express their solidarity with the poor and hungry, the deprived and the disadvantaged. [8]"

William Donohue, head of the Catholic League, points out that science and learning was promoted by religion:

"It was the Catholic Church that created the first universities, and it was the Catholic Church that played a central role in the Scientific Revolution [9]"

The problem with this is the societies that are discussing were almost 100% Christian, so they are really talking about humanity in general. There does not seem to be any attempt to identify if these societal improvements were actually motivated by the Bible or the participants just happened to be Christians. Also, they are whitewashing the problems caused by Christians, the unresolved problems in society, and in the environment that were largely caused by Christians. Christian promotion of education is arguably overshadowed by religion suppressing learning at least as much. Most often, the lifting of oppression was achieved when the oppressors were almost entirely Christian too: for example, the Atlantic [slave](#) trade was created and operated by Christians.

"The fact that religious faith has left its mark on every aspect of civilization is not an argument in its favor, nor can any particular faith be exonerated simply because certain of its adherents made foundational contributions to human culture."

— Sam Harris, *The End of Faith*

Larger families

"In America, the higher fertility of the religious majority makes up for the low fertility of others. Thus, one of the primary blessings of American faith is that we are not faced with the many problems resulting from a shrinking population.^[3]"

Smaller families are usually associated with stable societies. We already have an over-populated planet, so this is arguably a detriment to society.

Encourages education



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[Religiosity and education](#)

"Americans who never attend church are significantly less likely to have finished high school than are those who attend weekly. Moreover, overwhelming evidence exists that not only do religious people care more than the less religious about their children's education, but they see to it that the children learn more.^[3]"

The link between religiosity and education is complex, with different countries and generations showing positive or negative associations.

More cultured

"Weekly [church] attenders place more importance on high culture (painting, music of all kinds, dance, theater, and creative literature) than do nonattenders. ^[3]"

There is also a significant amount of religiously inspired art.

Less superstitious

"Traditional Christian religion greatly decreases credulity as measured by belief in the occult and the paranormal.^[3]"

Criticism

Belief irrespective of evidence


Since the belief in God is not based on evidence, it is possible the belief is untrue. The believer tacitly admits that they don't care if their view is consistent with reality. It is possible to participate in religions socially without regarding them as true, as in the case of [Christian atheism](#).

Religion was incidental

Many religious people are greatly beneficial to society. However, they probably would have been so if they were of a different religion or no religion at all. [Correlation does not entail causation](#). Also, this is a poor explanation because anti-[slavery](#) and other movements occurred at a particular point. Religion was present throughout history. Therefore, religion is

not a sufficient explanation for the *timing* of these social movements. We must look to other factors to explain it.

Many people have used religious arguments that were anti-progressive and seem to be just as valid as pro-religious arguments.

There is little basis for these social movements in scripture. The Bible does not forbid slavery and says evil should not be resisted [Matthew 5:39](#) .

Religion can do harm

Main Article: [Religion is harmful to society](#)

Religion may negatively affect individuals physiologically and financially. Many societal problems, such as terrorism, bigotry, discrimination and totalitarianism, have been laid directly at the feet of religion.

"For example, religious participation also often inspires people to be prejudiced against outsiders and minorities. In a 1950s study, the psychologist Gordon Allport showed that religious people were much more prejudiced against minority groups and foreigners than non-religious people. And in perhaps the most disconcerting study cited by Bloom, a research team recently found that exposing subjects to religiously themed words actually increased their levels of prejudice against African-Americans. [... However,] Religiosity that emphasized external rewards and social acceptance was associated with negative feelings toward members of other races, while religiousness that was focused on internal, subjective goals wasn't."^[2]

A study of 1200 children from six countries found that children with a religious upbringing were less altruistic and more punitive than non-religious children. ^[10]

Atheists also do good

Atheists also do good, so by this logic, atheism is also justified. In a study looking moral actions in everyday life in the US and Canada, religious and non-religious people self reported about the same number of moral acts. ^[11]

See also

- [Atheism causes evil](#)
- [Is Theistic Religion A Consolation?](#)
- [Religion provides hope](#)
- [Religious belief has psychological benefits](#)

References

1. [↑] ^[1]
2. [↑] ^{2.0 2.1} ^[2]
3. [↑] ^{3.0 3.1 3.2 3.3 3.4} Rodney Stark, *America's Blessings: How Religion Benefits Everyone, Including Atheists*, 2012

4. [↑ Dave Niose, Misinformation and facts about secularism and religion, March 30, 2011](#)
5. [↑ Phil Zuckerman, Atheism, Secularity, and Well-Being: How the Findings of Social Science Counter Negative Stereotypes and Assumptions, Sociology Compass 3/6 \(2009\): 949–971, 10.1111/j.1751-9020.2009.00247.x](#)
6. [↑ \[3\]](#)
7. [↑ John Blanchard, Why believe the Bible?, 2004](#)
8. [↑ Stott, J. 1984. Issues Facing Christians Today. p. 19.](#)
9. [↑ \[4\]](#)
10. [↑ \[5\]](#)
11. [↑ Macrina Cooper-White, So Much For Religious People Being More Righteous, Huffington Post, 09/17/2014](#)

External links

- [Hasn't Religion Led The World To Be a Better Place?, The Atheist Experience #583](#)

You can't prove God doesn't exist

It is not uncommon for [apologists](#) to make statements like, "**You can't prove God doesn't exist,**" when they are challenged to support their own claim that [God](#) exists. Such statements are intended to [shift the burden of proof](#), and therefore represent a [logical fallacy](#).

"Since we do not know everything, no one can disprove the existence of God. God might be somewhere outside of our knowledge. Moreover, if we knew everything—which is the only way to disprove God—we would end up being God ourselves and, thus, atheism would be false! [\[1\]](#)"

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- [1 Argument from ignorance](#)
- [2 Burden of Proof](#)
- [3 Great pumpkin objection](#)
- [4 References](#)

Argument from ignorance

Arguments similar to, "Belief in proposition X is justified because [you can't prove it's not true](#)," are based on the premise that belief in something is justified until sufficient evidence refutes its existence (i.e. [argument from ignorance](#)). In this case, the theist is asserting that belief in God is justified even without evidence. While this view may seem reasonable to those who already accept the existence of God, this approach to belief merely represents a form of [compartmentalization](#). If we were to broadly accept the general premise (i.e., "belief is warranted because you can't prove a negative"), we would be unable to develop any useful picture of [reality](#) because every claim would be necessarily accepted as [true](#) until it was disproved. This is a burden that is impossible to meet when dealing with [supernatural](#) claims. The theist is compartmentalizing his or her supernatural beliefs and applying standards different from those applied to other beliefs. To put it more bluntly, a rational person does not seriously claim that [leprechauns](#) or [unicorns](#) must be assumed to exist because we have not *disproved* their existence.

Tellingly, apologists typically apply this premise only to questions pertaining to *their particular religion* — and not to questions pertaining to other religions. The [Christian](#) who argues, "You can't prove God doesn't exist," would almost certainly reject such an argument from a [Hindu](#) who says, "You can't prove [Vishnu](#) doesn't exist!" This compartmentalization, in which one's cherished beliefs are subjected to a special set of standards, is a form of [special pleading](#).

Burden of Proof

Apologists have the [burden of proof](#) for the existence of god since they are making a knowledge claim and their view is [unfalsifiable](#). Philosopher [Bertrand Russell](#) compared the attempt to disprove god to attempting to disprove the existence of a celestial teapot. Since it is impractical to expect a disproof of either and are therefore unfalsifiable, the burden of proof cannot lay with the skeptic.

Great pumpkin objection

Main Article: [Argument from divine sense](#)

Many people might object that if belief in God is basic (i.e., rational without evidence), why can't any belief, such as a belief in the Great Pumpkin, also be basic? Therefore, the view that synthetic propositions, such as the great pumpkin exists, can be basic is a [broken compass argument](#). [Alvin Plantinga](#), a Christian philosopher of theology, responds to this objection by arguing that our culture and our society help form our understandings of rationality, and that we should move away from a foundationalist account for basic beliefs. If the paradigm can be shifted such that belief in God can be considered *properly basic*, then no further justification is necessary, and the assumption of God's existence is warranted. The problem with Plantinga's response is the absence of universal standards for judging whether a particular belief can be reasonably taken to be basic. Ultimately, shifting the argument to validating God as a basic assumption forms the dubious basis of [presuppositional apologetics](#).

References

1. [↑](#) ^[1]

Science can't touch god

Apologists sometimes insist that evidence-based arguments against god are ineffective because "[science](#) can't touch god." It might be true that scientific approaches have no epistemological access to God, but only if such a god has characteristics making him immaterial, untestable, and non-interactive with the natural world. In other words, an untouchable God is one that has no discernible effect on the natural world.

Counter Apologetics

- This argument requires that God is not physical and has no physical relationship to the universe. The necessary absence of possible evidence for a god defined as "untouchable by science" makes it especially difficult to advance the proposition that a generic god or a god with any particular characteristics actually exists. Untouchable by science means inaccessible by anyone; how does the theist demonstrate the rationality of believing in a God that is inaccessible?
- It is essential to recognize that science comments on the [natural](#), and has nothing to say about the [supernatural](#). Despite the claims of many apologists, scientific approaches have not proved the existence of any supernatural gods. In fact, *supernatural* seems to be a catch-all term for things that do not exist (or are believed to not exist) in the natural world; once they are shown to exist, they are acknowledged as part of the natural world! Science clearly cannot touch vague, immaterial notions about the existence of a deity, but if science does manage to touch it, it becomes no longer a vague, immaterial notion.
- This argument is similar to stating, "My god might exist because [you can't prove it doesn't!](#)" In this case, the atheist might suggest that the theist consider every other religion ever conceived -- [Hinduism](#), [Islam](#), [Pastafarianism](#), [Catholicism](#), [Christianity](#), or any one of numerous [ancient religions](#) that have come and gone. If the theist recognizes that this argument does nothing to support the existence of these other deities, why does it support the existence of his or her own god? At the very least, this points out that the argument does not help him or her select among the competing versions of the "untouchable god".

God can't be defined

God can't be defined is a defensive apologist strategy that claims that we, as humans, lack the capability to properly comprehend the truth of what God is, and therefore we are not competent to define him, let alone disprove him. This is also referred to as "God works in mysterious ways" or "God moves in mysterious ways".

This argument is a common companion to "[You can't prove God doesn't exist.](#)"

Counter Apologetics

- It is unreasonable to refuse to discuss God because of a lack of clear definition. This is an example of [Loki's wager](#).
- The first problem with this statement is that the claim of an undefinable entity requires no refutation, so the argument lacks rhetorical power.
- The atheist can point out that the claimant is attempting to 'sneak' premises into the argument. The notion of 'god' has a long history associated with it, and the entity it describes has been given numerous attributes; the theist is assuming that these attributes can be defined for an undefinable God, while there remain other attributes that cannot. The theist is also sneaking in the assumption that a fundamentally undefinable entity can nonetheless exist in reality.
- If something is undefinable, then by claiming it exists is to provide definition, making the argument self-refuting.
- By raising this objection, the theist is admitting that despite being undefinable, he or she believes that God nonetheless exists. How does he or she arrive at such a claim without the capacity to even so much as define the object of the claim?
- If humans lack the intellectual power to define God, how can humans be expected to have the intellectual power to evaluate claims about this god? How did the theist arrive at a specific version of the god claim? Here, some may claim that they have supernatural knowledge of a particular god, but not enough knowledge to adequately define him. Even so, making it [supernatural](#) is no more than an [appeal to ignorance](#) and a claim of personal revelation.
- If the theist assumes that God created humankind to worship him, why does this God not give us the capacity to define what we are worshipping? Why does he instead demand that we worship an ill-formed, contradictory mess of an idea that doesn't come close to representing his essence? For that matter, if we worship one particular (inadequate) model of him, are we worshipping God or the model of God?

So you think we came from monkeys

The retort "**So you think we came from monkeys?**" usually are derived from the misunderstanding or intentional distortion of [scientific](#) conclusions. They are examples of [straw man](#) fallacies, as well as prime examples of [appeal to emotion](#) and [wishful thinking](#) at their core: Reality and Facts are NOT about what we desire to be true. One famous usage was in the 1860 Wilberforce-Huxley debate:

"[Bishop Wilberforce] chafed him and asked whether he had a preference for the descent being on the father's side or the mother's side?"

Contents
1_We came from pond soup
2_We came from dirt/rocks/clay
3_We came from nothing
4_If we came from monkeys, why are there still monkeys?
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We came from pond soup

This retort refers to the theory of [abiogenesis](#), the theory that life originated from non-living matter. This theory often is interpreted by the apologist to mean that there existed a single small pond wherein amino acids were formed by electricity, such as from lightning. This description, for reasons that are unclear, condescendingly refers to mixtures of elements and compounds in this hypothetical pool as "soup". Are the ocean, rain puddles, and lakes also comprised of "soup"? Clearly, the phrase "pond soup" is meant as a rhetorical tactic and not a reasonable description of the theory. Also, the notion that there was a single pond that spawned life is probably missing the point of the theory; there would have existed innumerable environments across earth in which different reactions occurred under different conditions, vastly increasing the probability that self-replicating compounds might arise. All the "hopes" for the future of life did not rest in a single pond.

Furthermore, the [Miller-Urey experiment](#) on the chemical origins of life demonstrated that organic compounds forming the building blocks for life on Earth can be synthesized naturally through chemical reactions. It provided evidence in support of abiogenesis, because it showed that natural processes facilitate readily-available complex molecules that plausibly form precursors to life. Of course, this does not imply that such molecules were intended to create life, but that any early life arising would necessarily incorporate such molecules. Rejecting the theory of abiogenesis based on the retort, "You think we came from pond soup," utterly misses the evidence for the theory in favor of sloganeering.

We came from dirt/rocks/clay

This retort also refers to the theory of [abiogenesis](#). It suffers from the same shortcomings as the 'pond soup' retort, namely the strong evidence that components for life arise from nonliving matter through purely natural means.

If the theist is a Biblical literalist, the atheist could point out that the book of Genesis says that God made man from dirt. However, such a statement doesn't do much to advance the breadth or depth of the discussion. It does however show the hypocrisy and [Special pleading](#) in the theist's argument, seeing their own "version" of the same claim as better than that of others.

We came from nothing

Typically, this version of the retort is in reference to the [Big Bang](#). It has been used by [apologists](#), such as [Ray Comfort](#) and [Kirk Cameron](#), who featured it in an episode of their television series, "The Way of the Master." The retort is generally used flippantly, without evidence of real understanding. Since science does not yet have any answers about what happened *before* the Big Bang, the intellectually honest position taken by most [atheists](#) and most scientists is, "I don't know." If a fellow atheist does invoke the Big Bang as evidence for something from nothing, it is appropriate to question his or her understanding of the theory.

The Big Bang is often misinterpreted as a "something from nothing" proposition. In fact, the Big Bang doesn't suggest any particular origin for the singularity, the infinitely dense and hot point of matter from which the universe was born. Some physicists, such as [Victor Stenger](#), have developed hypotheses about how the universe could represent "something from nothing", but such hypotheses are not yet tested. In reality, the Big Bang theory 1) is limited to the measurable universe, and makes no claims about "before" the measurable universe, and 2) is based on the uncontroversial observation that the universe appears to be expanding from a point since the beginning of time. Ultimately, it is difficult to argue that something *had* to exist "before" the big bang, as space and time began with the Big Bang. "Before" and "after" and "cause and effect" are notions necessarily applied within our space-time. Is there a reason to believe such notions as "something can't come from nothing" can be applied effectively to "pre"-Big Bang?

To assert that the Big Bang absurdly represents something from nothing but God reasonably represents something from something is to grossly misunderstand both the Big Bang theory and the philosophical problems of the origins of God. The atheist can point out that all attempts to understand the origin of existence requires "something from nothing", including the existence of God himself.

Abiogenesis and [Evolution](#) are also occasionally misunderstood to be "something from nothing" concepts, but they absolutely are not. Any theory that invokes natural/physical explanations and is confined to the matter of the existing universe is not a "something from nothing" proposition.

If we came from monkeys, why are there still monkeys?



For more information, see the [TalkOrigins Archive](#) article:

[If we are descended from apes, why are there still apes around?](#)

This version of the retort refers to evolution, especially the origins of the human species. A common misconception about evolution is that we evolved from the monkeys and apes we see today. This ignorance forms the basis for the question, "**If we evolved from monkeys and apes, then why are there still monkeys and apes?**"

Part of the difficulty of this issue is definitional. "Monkeys" and "Apes" describe families on the primate branch of the evolutionary tree of life on Earth. Modern *Homo sapiens*, along with gorillas, chimpanzees, and other apes, belong to the "Great Ape" family (also known as Hominidae). These species are more closely related to one another than they are to any other species on Earth, based on overwhelming evidence. Therefore, it is clear that all the apes share a common ancestor in the past, and that all the apes plus all the monkeys together share a common ancestor even further back. This common ancestor to apes and monkeys was *NOT* any of the primates that exist today, but a species that was ancestral to all the modern apes and monkeys.

In essence, the various species of apes and monkeys can be thought of colloquially as "cousins". A person who exists today, upon hearing they are related to their cousins, would not think to retort, "You think I came from my cousins?" Likewise, a person, upon hearing that humans are related to their evolutionary cousins, would be mistaken to retort, "You think I came from my evolutionary cousins?" If a theist wants to challenge the view that humans share a common ancestor with other primates, he or she should first understand the nature of the claim and the evidence available to support it. This retort demonstrates that the claimant understands neither.

Something that [creationists](#) are incorrect about is their view that evolutionary change occurs in a straight line of descent, like a ladder of progress from the oldest species to the newest species. In reality, diversification of species is more appropriately seen as a branching process instead of a ladder-like process. Therefore, evolutionary relationships are depicted as "trees" showing the relationships between all the different organisms on Earth. Modern humans, monkeys, and apes evolved from different common ancestors that branched off to form a tree of species, in different families, in which we are included.

There are approximately 5,400 known species of mammals on the planet, all of which can be traced back to original mammal lineages arising and flourishing after the reptiles were apparently decimated by the effects of a comet or asteroid that impacted the earth some 65 million years ago. Primates can be traced to a single lineage that branched off from the other

mammal lineages around this time. Over time, the primate lineage diversified, and species went extinct while others didn't. After humans, chimpanzees, and bonobos became distinct groups derived from their shared common ancestor, several additional species of hominids arose in the *Homo* genus, such as *Homo erectus*, *Homo neanderthalensis* and *Homo sapiens*. Out of those nine species, only one avoided extinction: *Homo sapiens* (humans). Ours is a remarkable story of evolutionary change and survival spanning eras. "You think we came from monkeys/apes" utterly misses out on all that evolutionary biology has shown us about who we are and where we come from.

Similar counter-retorts

The following questions mirror the logic or understanding of this retort. There are two groups of arguments.

Group 1 are those arguments that assume members of a group come from their modern relatives:

- If I came from cousins, why do my cousins still exist?
- If the English language came from German, why do people still speak German?

Group 2 are those arguments that imply all members of a group must change in unison:

- If dogs are domesticated from wolves, why do wolves still exist?
- If corn is domesticated from a grass, why does grass still exist?
- If Americans came from Europe, why are there still Europeans?
- *[if they believe the Genesis creation myth:]* If women came from a rib, why are there still ribs? If man came from dirt, why is there still dirt?

No shame in being an ape



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[1860 Oxford evolution debate](#)

This argument is often based on the supposed shame of being related to a monkey. A classic rebuttal was made reportedly made by [Thomas Henry Huxley](#) in the 1860 Oxford evolution debate, arguing he was more ashamed of being related to deceptive human apologists:

"I asserted—and I repeat—that a man has no reason to be ashamed of having an ape for his grandfather. If there were an ancestor whom I should feel shame in recalling it would rather be a man—a man of restless and versatile intellect—who, not content with an equivocal success in his own sphere of activity, plunges into scientific questions with which he has no real acquaintance, only to obscure them by an aimless rhetoric, and

distract the attention of his hearers from the real point at issue by eloquent digressions and skilled appeals to religious prejudice.^[1]

However, the exact details of the exchange are unknown and accounts of it are inconsistent.^[2]

External links

- Chart answering "[If humans evolved from monkeys, why are there still monkeys?](#)"

If God didn't create everything, who did?

This argument betrays the [theist's](#) built-in assumption that the [universe](#) was created by a sentient being. This argument is an example of the logical fallacies of the [argument from ignorance](#) and [begging the question](#).

Counter-arguments

Main Article: [God of the gaps](#)

- The use of the word "who" makes this a [complex question](#), or a question in which multiple questions or assumptions are being considered without acknowledging so. The person asking the question presupposes that the universe was created by a person (a "who" rather than a "what"). A better series of questions would be "Are we even in the position to make specific claims about "pre"-universe existence?" and "Do we have a reason to believe that a sentient being exists outside of the universe?" and "Do we have a reason to assume that the universe was caused by this sentient being instead of some other phenomenon?" For the atheist, the answers to these questions are likely to be 1) no, 2) no, and 3) no, because humans lack the epistemological and philosophical evidence required to answer otherwise. For the theist, the answers are likely to be 1) yes, 2) yes, and 3) yes, but each of these answers requires justification. The need for such justification is, of course, the essential point of disagreement between the atheist and the theist, so the question does nothing to advance the discussion.
- The question also raises a [false dichotomy](#) by assuming that either 1) [God](#) created the universe, or 2) some other being did so. It ignores the possibility that both of those explanations might be wrong, and that sentience played no role in the origins of the universe. Further, any being who had the power to create the universe would be a god by definition, so the very question is [illogical](#).

- It is difficult to claim that an undemonstrated concept or entity should be the default answer to a question for which we have no other answers. The more appropriate default answer is, "We don't know, yet". The reasoning involved in asking this question also is [circular](#), because the point of the question is to demonstrate the very thing (God) that's assumed by the question to be the default answer.
- The question ignores the problem that if one assumes the universe *needed* to have a sentient creator, then there is every reason to assume that the sentient creator also *needed* to have a sentient creator, who in turn was created by a sentient creator, ad infinitum. The non-theist's answer for the origins of the universe is, "We don't believe in God and we don't know where the universe came from," while the theist's answer is "God created the universe, but we don't know where god came from." This is simply shifting the unanswered question one step back, and therefore has no explanatory power.
- Even if the question's presupposition is correct, and the universe were created, it does not lead to any knowledge of the creator. It does not require a single creator (see [polytheism](#)), any creator that still exists, or any god figures of any specific religion.

That might be true for you, but it's not true for me

(Redirected from [That might be true for you, but its not true for me](#))

This argument was made famous by [Bill O'Reilly](#) on his show The O'Reilly Factor, in an interview with [Richard Dawkins](#).

Dawkins retorts, "You mean true for you is different from true for anybody else?"

In this response, Dawkins means to say that if something is "true for you" then this denies the existence of facts independent of anyone's beliefs. If O'Reilly's statement is a true reflection of what he thinks, he must necessarily reject the concept of objective realities (usually considered synonymous with the term "[facts](#)") and dismiss [methodological empiricism](#) (i.e. observational [science](#)).

Though O'Reilly's statement was likely made without consideration of its implications, the argument in general infers that the person considers his own reasoning and [intuition](#) more valid a foundation for belief than reason and empirical evidence.

This argument can be interpreted as an assertion of [relativism](#).

External links

- [Richard Dawkins on Bill O'Reilly](#), Youtube

Religion is another way of knowing

Stating "religion is another way of knowing" is an appeal to an egalitarian impulse for equity. It constitutes an argument by pathos. It also constitutes a support of [relativism](#).

"All ways of knowing are have equal influence when justifying knowledge claims in religion. Therefore there is no way of knowing that is more important than the other. Many see faith as the more stereotypical way of knowing that has the most influence when justifying knowledge claims in religion. However something that seems as opposing as reason has at least the same if not more influence when justifying knowledge claims in religion. Religion is very personal. Everyone interprets religion differently."

— Caitlin Low ^[1]

The argument is similar to the [argument from divine sense](#), which suggests there is a distinct faculty in humans that directly provides religious knowledge. It is also related to the idea of [nonoverlapping magisteria](#), which claims that religion and science make claims in distinct areas which are "two separate realms of human experience".

Counter arguments

If we consider religion to be "another way of knowing", what other methods of forming beliefs might be imagined? Consulting a Magic 8-Ball is also another way of knowing. Or, to make it more general, guessing is another way of knowing. It's premise that religion or another other method of arriving at belief is equally valid is a [broken compass argument](#).

Discussions often turns into "How do you know that this knowledge is true?". Using the word "knowledge" might look like it implies that the data is true by definition, but this is not the case. We can read the Harry Potter books and gain knowledge about Harry Potter and the world in which the story is set. It is knowledge, and it's true in a sense that it is true to the description given in the book, but it is not a factual description of a real, existing world.

Science purposely has mechanisms and procedures to verify and confirm collected knowledge, whereas religion does not. Religion makes claims to knowledge, and sticks to those claims no matter what.

References

1. [↑](#) Caitlin Low, [Faith as a Way of Knowing](#), March 13, 2014

See also

- [Argument from divine sense](#)
- [Christian existentialism](#)

Apologetics and dinosaurs

Dinosaurs were a type of reptile that existed 231 to 66 million years ago and, at the time, were the dominant terrestrial vertebrates. Dinosaur species of that time are now extinct. Modern birds are descended from a subgroup of dinosaurs and are, in a sense, still dinosaurs.

Large fossilized bones have mystified people for centuries. In the early 1800s, Gideon Mantell and Richard Owen realised that the fossils belonged to extinct animals and plants. The fossils are buried in rock layers that geologists claim take hundreds of millions of years to form. This theory rules out young Earth [creationism](#) and is also a key piece of evidence for [evolution](#). Religious thinkers have since tried to reconcile the existence of fossils or dinosaurs with their scripture and doctrine.

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Dinosaurs went extinct since the great flood

A significant proportion of young Earth [creationists](#) believe that God created dinosaurs and co-existed with humans. Apologists argue that monsters described in the Bible are possibly dinosaurs. Dinosaurs went extinct some time after the [great flood](#).

"[The Bible] also tells us why we no longer see them today: the worldwide Flood of Noah's day destroyed most of these creatures (as well as everything and everyone that breathed air and dwelt on land that were not inside the Ark), and the rest slowly died out because of the changing environment and the spread of humanity from Babel. [\[1\]](#)"

Apologists attempt to explain how the fossils came to be buried in rock that takes hundreds of millions of years to form, but their claims are not accepted by mainstream science.

God created dinosaur bones but no dinosaurs

One idea, called the Omphalos hypothesis, suggests that God created the earth relatively recently but with the appearance that it is very ancient. The possible motive for God's action is either [God can't be defined](#) or a test of faith. Formerly, this view had some popularity but has not fallen out of favour. The argument is intended to undermine the evidence for [evolution](#).

"[God](#) doesn't want to let gullible people into [heaven](#), so he tests you with dinosaur bones to make sure you actually know how to think for yourself not just listen to experts."

Counter-apologetics

- It's [begging the question](#), assuming atheists haven't already "thought for themselves", and examined the evidence.
- It's begging the question additionally, assuming there's a god to "test" us, at all.
- The claim is not [falsifiable](#), and thus cannot be considered within a scientific context.
- It's in violation of [Occam's Razor](#), in that the simpler explanation is that dinosaurs died and fossilized, without an additional agents and motivations.
- It's accusing atheists of engaging in the [argument from authority](#). Accepting the claims is based from [evidence](#) and [skepticism](#), not because "experts" said so.
- Given a choice between evidence and logic-based claims by experts, and no-evidence and illogical-based claims from [religious](#) sources, it's a far better choice to go with the evidence.
- This scenario makes God a deceiver.

Satan created dinosaur bones but no dinosaur

The possibility that Satan created dinosaur bones is sometimes discussed on apologist Internet forums but the argument is generally not used by apologists.

"[Satan](#) is trying to destroy your [faith](#) by placing dinosaur bones in the ground to contradict the [Bible](#)."

Counter-apologetics

- There is no evidence for the claim and one might as well say that the [Flying Spaghetti Monster](#) is trying to trick them with the Bible.
- Dinosaur bones existed prior to an understanding of fossils, and presumably prior to the time the Bible was written. Prior to knowledge of extinctions, misunderstood fossils helped support Biblical stories, such as mistakenly interpreting partial fossil evidence to be bones of giant people.
- Most fossils are not of creatures generally considered remarkable. Did Satan take the time to fossilize ordinary clams? If so, why would God allow the radical alterations to the planet's surface necessary to account for large fossil beds, and wouldn't that make Satan co-creator of the earth? Did Satan just fake dinosaur bones? If so, it does nothing to attack evolution in general.

References

1. [↑] [\[1\]](#)

See also

- [Creation science](#)

External links

- [Omphalos hypothesis](#), rational wiki

Abortion



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[Abortion](#)



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[Beginning of pregnancy controversy](#)



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[Abortion law](#)

Abortion is the medical practice of terminating a viable pregnancy. There is disagreement as to when a pregnancy begins: either at when sperm fertilizes the egg or the implantation of the egg into the lining of the uterus. ^[1] In modern times abortion is a surgical procedure or is medically induced using drugs, but the ancients had their forms of abortion as well. In ancient Greece, for example, the practice was to have the pregnant woman drink a poison that would force her to have a miscarriage. Both pregnancy and abortion carry a variety of medical risks.

Medically speaking, an abortion can be spontaneous (miscarriage) or therapeutic (induced). This article treats abortion as synonymous with induced abortion.

People who believe that elective abortion should be legal as called "Pro-Choice" - choice in this case referring to the woman's right to choose whether or not to have an abortion. Availability of legal abortions has societal benefits, individual benefits and prevents risky unregulated abortions. ^[2] Those who believe that access to abortion should be legally limited, or that it should be illegal, are described as "Pro-Life." Religious belief and a pro-life attitude typically go together ^[3], but one by no means implies the other. The terms "pro-choice" and "pro-life" are examples of political framing.

Abortion is allowed by law in many Western nations, including nominally Christian nations such as [Canada](#) and the [United Kingdom](#) (except Northern Ireland). It is more regulated in [Ireland](#), [Poland](#), and most of South America and Africa. In many of these jurisdictions, it is often allowed if the pregnancy endangers the woman's life.

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Ectopic pregnancy

An ectopic pregnancy occurs when the egg implants outside of the womb, typically in a fallopian tube. In the UK, it occurs in 1-2% pregnancies. ^[4] The fetus will almost never survive an ectopic pregnancy and the pregnant woman's life is in grave danger without medical intervention i.e. ending the pregnancy (an abortion, loosely speaking). For this reason, ending an ectopic pregnancy which saves a woman's life is allowed in almost every country.

Medical practitioners define abortion as only applying to "intrauterine pregnancies" or "otherwise viable pregnancies", which would exclude ectopic pregnancy. ^[5] Pro-life campaigners agree that ending an ectopic pregnancy is not an abortion. ^[6] While medically speaking, ending an ectopic pregnancy is not abortion, according to pro-life definitions it is murder. Theists may defend allowing this procedure by referring to the "principle of the double effect", i.e. murder is not the "intent" when saving the woman's life.

The Bible

Ordeal of the bitter water




For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

Ordeal of the bitter water

Some pro-choice proponents argue that the [Old Testament](#) describes an abortion being preformed as a sanctioned action: ^{[7][8]}

"But if you have gone astray while married to your husband and you have made yourself impure by having sexual relations with a man other than your husband"— here the priest is to put the woman under this curse—"may the Lord cause you to become a curse[a] among your people when he makes your womb miscarry and your abdomen swell. May this water that brings a curse enter your body so that your abdomen swells or your womb miscarries." "Then the woman is to say, "Amen. So be it."

— [Numbers 5:20-22](#)  (New International Version)

The translation in the NIV is controversial and some translations use "thigh shall fall away" instead of "womb miscarry". Apologists usually argue that the wife is not necessarily pregnant, but rather is passage describes a "trial by poison" if infidelity is suspected.

"Pregnancy is nowhere mentioned, or even hinted at, in the text."^[9]

Apart from the "abdomen swelling" being a possible indication of pregnancy, it is unclear what a "thigh shall fall away" means. It may refer to uterine prolapse or sterilization.^[10] Some interpretations consider this to mean abortion *and* possible sterilization. Being a trial by ordeal does not stop it being an abortion: non-pregnant (innocent) women would pass the trial and pregnant (guilty) women would have a miscarriage. ^[11]

"Dirty water does not end a pregnancy. The curse was not in the water itself, but in the judgment of God. If God decrees that the penalty of adultery will be the loss of the child, that is his prerogative and well within his authority."^[12]

Well that is one way to rationalize it: just perform an abortion in a religious ceremonial context and say "God did it!"

Christian views



For more information, see the [Skeptic's Annotated Bible](#) article:

What the Bible says about Abortion

The majority of Christians believe [life begins at conception](#), ^[13] which means abortion is comparable to murder.

"Since the first century the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable. Direct abortion, that is to say, abortion willed either as an end or a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law" ^[14]



This teaching applies even in cases where the pregnancy was caused by rape. A significant number of Christians have abortions, despite this teaching.

"More times than I can count, I've heard this remorseful comment from a post-abortive parent: 'I knew it was wrong to abort my child. I was brought up in the church and was pro-life. But I did it anyway.'" ^[15]

In fact, the abortion rate of Christians and non-Christians in the US is about the same or even higher for believers! (Although abortion rates vary based on the specific denomination and other factors). ^[16] ^[17] This may be largely due to the lack of **sex education** and **contraception** usage in more religious groups. If we consider abortion as bad, this is an example of **social harm caused by religion**. The behaviour of Christians in this regard is evidence that, for many, their faith is not as sincere as they tell themselves.

Assisting in abortion is also considered a sin. The Catholic church applies an automatic **excommunication** on anyone obtaining or providing an abortion. ^[14]

In 2012, Irish anti-abortion laws prevented Savita Halappanavar from receiving an abortion which could have saved her life. ^[18] The law was religiously motivated.

If abortion was wrong, it is strange that it is not explicitly addressed in the **Bible**. Sometimes **James 2:26**  is cited ^[19] but this only says the spirit must inhabit the body to consider it alive, not that life begins at conception. The current Christian teaching is based on questionable interpretation of certain verses. Murder and causing a miscarriage do not carry the same penalty in the **Old Testament**, therefore they are distinct **Exodus 21:22-23** . The Bible contains several other verses that contradict the Christian view. ^[20]

Early church fathers



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

History of Christian thought on abortion

St. Augustine taught that the soul is not present at conception but after 40 or 80 days (**Delayed ensoulment**), although he opposed abortion. He clearly distinguished abortion from murder:

"The law does not provide that the act abortion pertains to homicide, for there cannot yet be said to be a live soul in a body that lacks sensation"

— **St. Augustine**

"The seed gradually takes shape in the uterus, and it [abortion] does not count as killing until the individual elements have acquired their external appearance and their limbs"

— **St. Jerome**

The abortion controversy proves absolute morality exists

To support the [moral argument](#), apologists can say:

"In fact, instead of providing an example of relative moral values, the entire abortion controversy exists because each side defends what they think is an absolute moral value—protecting life and allowing liberty (i.e., allowing a woman to “control her own body”).^[21]"

That is not true because it is a [hasty generalization](#).

Catholic church



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[Abortion and the Catholic Church](#)

The [Catholic](#) church has been opposed all direct abortions and claims their position is unchangeable. Procuring or performing an abortion leads to an automatic [excommunication](#). This includes:

- no abortions for women who are too unwell to carry the pregnancy to term, unless the treatment for the mother indirectly causes the abortion.^[22]
- no abortions for [rape](#) or [incest](#) victims ^[23]
- no abortions even if the baby would be severely deformed.^[23]

It does allow termination of ectopic pregnancies or the uterus is itself cancerous. The church's stance is a form of [religiously motivated medical neglect](#).

Principle of the double effect



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[Principle of double effect](#)

The [Catholic](#) church does not allow "direct" abortions but does when it is an "unintended" result of some other essential medical procedure.

"The mother is not saved by the death of the child but by the removal of the tube. Because the death of the child in this case is a side effect which is not intended, and because the saving of the mother's life is not brought about by the death of the child, such a removal of the damaged portion of the tube is morally permissible. The ethical rule that applies here is called the Principle of the Double Effect.^[24]"

This arguable places too much emphasis on intent and essentially ignores [likely outcomes of an action](#) which is the usual basis of any decision. It also prevents early intervention which may be less medically risky for the pregnant woman. Insisting that the fallopian tube be removed in cases of ectopic pregnancy seem unnecessarily cruel and reduces her fertility.

"In the event of an ectopic pregnancy, you may remove the malfunctioning tube, which unfortunately also will cause the death of the baby. Other techniques, such as methotrexate or microsurgery to remove the pregnancy while leaving the tube intact are immoral. ^[25]"

"So a woman can have her whole tube removed (an unnecessary procedure that could reduce her future fertility), but she can not have the pregnancy plucked out (as is done with the standard therapy, a salpingostomy, where a small incision is made in the tube and the pregnancy removed) and she most certainly could not have the methotrexate. ^[26]"

Counter arguments to Christian views

Banning abortion does not prevent abortion

While many religious and non-religious people agree that abortion should be minimized were possible, disagreement often arises as to how this should be achieved. The approach of banning abortion by law is ineffective because banning abortion does not significantly reduce the rate of abortions. ^[27] This is possibly because women seeking an abortion procure one regardless of its legality.

All that an abortion ban achieves is increasing risk to the health of women.

Steps that have been shown to reduce the abortion rate are resisted by some Christians on religious grounds, such as increasing availability to [contraception](#) and improving [sex education](#). Since fundamentalist Christians prefer ineffective methods for reducing the number of abortions, they are hypocrites when they call for less abortions.

"The pro-life movement supports the exact policies that will keep abortion rates high. It is those who believe in choice who support policies that will bring the abortion rates down. ^[28]"

Calendar-based contraceptive methods are murder

Some denominations, such as the [Catholic church](#), consider calendar-based methods, which includes the rhythm method and NFP, to be an acceptable form of [contraception](#). It is the only form of contraception if church teachings are followed and is often practised despite its unreliability.

"The Catholic Church supports the methods of Natural Family Planning (NFP) because they respect God's design for married love. ^[29]"

The rhythm method produces fertilized embryos that are incapable of surviving because the uterus is not in a state that makes embryo implanting likely. ^[30] This causes a high likelihood that the embryo will be spontaneously aborted as part of the [menstrual cycle](#). The likelihood of embryo death is higher with calendar methods than some other contraceptive methods. By their own logic, this makes the church's support of calendar-based contraception the same as calling for the murder of embryos!

"Some proponents of the pro-life movement argue against morning after pills, IUDs, and contraceptive pills on grounds of a concern for causing embryonic death. What has gone unnoticed, however, is that the pro-life line of argumentation can be extended to the rhythm method of contraception as well. Given certain plausible empirical assumptions, the rhythm method may well be responsible for a much higher number of embryonic deaths than some other contraceptive techniques. ^[31]"

Ultimately, this illustrates that "pro-life" Christians are not really concerned with embryo death but use this reasoning as an *ad hoc* justification for their arbitrary beliefs about abortion and contraception.

Life does not begin at conception

Critics of the argument that [life begins at conception](#) point out that:

- Life means it can survive independently, which the zygote/embryo cannot.
- Life starts at a different stage, such as implantation, beating heart, or at a certain time.
- Various scriptures seem to imply that life starts at a different stage.

"But anyone who would dogmatically insist that these traits [of humanity and the capacity to suffer] must arise coincident with the moment of conception has nothing to contribute, apart from his ignorance, to this debate."

— [Sam Harris](#), *The End of Faith*

Pro-life views

The pro-life movement is often associated with religion or Christian belief. However, a minority of atheists are pro-life. ^[3] Some of the apologetics used is secular in nature.

Alleged negative health impact



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[Abortion and mental health](#)



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[Abortion–breast cancer hypothesis](#)

"Emotional and/or psychological problems can arise when women deny or suppress the natural grief that results from the loss of their aborted child. [...] Abortion can also have physical effects on women and more and more evidence is arising as to the link between abortion and breast cancer. ^[32]"

Not handling grief in an appropriate way is a separate issue from the harm of abortion. However, various studies are beginning to conclude there is no increased mental health risks for first trimester abortions. Research is continuing for late term abortions. Carrying an unwanted child to term also has psychological costs.

The consensus of all mainstream scientific bodies is that abortions are not associated with a higher incidence of breast cancer.

Pro-life websites continue to spread misinformation that is contrary to the mainstream medical consensus.

Legislating morality

Pro-life movement seems to want to [legislate morality](#). They argue that since murder is illegal, we can also make abortion illegal in most cases. ^[33] Attempting to legislate morality raises the question: whose morality should we use? Also, there are moral principles that probably should not be enshrined in law, such as [adultery](#) or [religious dietary laws](#).

Contrary to the rights of the father

"Such a "choice" also imposes on the father by depriving him of fatherhood and the right to protect his own baby^[33]"

Pro-life movement opposes contraception

The pro-life movement generally opposes the use of [contraception](#). ^[28] Since contraception an effective method to reduce the abortion rate and banning abortion is ineffective, it shows the movement is not really about saving unborn lives but about social control, particularly of [women](#).

Slippery slope

"Decriminalisation would potentially allow for any woman to have an abortion at any stage of pregnancy for any reason. ^[34]"

This is a [slippery slope](#) argument. Allowing abortion in some cases does not automatically allow abortion in all cases. Regulations would still apply to most medical practitioners.

Abortion deserves the death penalty

Some pro-life groups call for the [death penalty](#) for procuring or supplying an abortion, seemingly unaware of the irony of their contradictory views. ^[35]

Jewish views

Abortion is allowed but not to be undertaken casually. If the mother's life is in danger, abortion is mandatory. ^[36]

Jainism

[Jainism](#) opposes abortions, even in cases of rape, incest or even on medically grounds. ^[37]

Islam

The [Qur'an](#) does not explicitly mention abortion. ^[38] This seems a strange oversight. Beliefs within Islam vary with some believing it is permissible and others saying it is forbidden. Muslims generally accept that an abortion is allowed if continuing the pregnancy would endanger the mother. Abortion is generally more acceptable in the earlier stages,

with different schools of jurisprudence specifying abortion is allowed before a certain number of weeks of pregnancy. There are differing views as to when the [soul](#) enters the foetus, ranging from [life begins at conception](#) to 120 days. ^[39]

Atheist views

While atheists tend to be pro-choice, there is a significant minority that are pro-life. A 2012 Gallup poll ^[3] of US adults found 68% of non-religious identified as pro-choice and 19% identify as pro-life.

A significant number of pro-choice atheists believe that abortions should be minimised, and either pro-choice is the way to achieve it or believe the pregnant woman should have the final say.

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37. [↑](#) [34]

38. [↑](#) [35]

39. [↑](#) [36]

External Links

- [The Abortion Debate on ProCon.org](#)
- ["Abortion: Is it Possible to be both 'Pro-life' and 'Pro-Choice'?"](#) - an essay by [Carl Sagan](#) and Ann Druyan
- [George Monbiot, Who's driving high abortion rates? It's the religious right](#), 13 Jan 2016
- [Pro-life Humanists](#)
- [N. F. Gier, Abortion, Persons, and the Fetus](#), God, Reason, and the Evangelicals

Homosexuality



For more information, see the [Skeptic's Annotated Bible](#) article:

[*What the Bible says about Homosexuality*](#)



For more information, see the [Skeptic's Annotated Bible](#) article:

[*Homosexuality in the Bible*](#)



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[*Homosexuality*](#)



For more information, see the [TalkOrigins Archive](#) article:

[*Homosexuality and evolution*](#)

Homosexuality is romantic or sexual attraction to members of one's own sex. The rights of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals is a contentious [political issue](#) in much of the world, due in part to [religious](#) views on the perceived [immorality](#) of homosexuality. In contemporary times, the legalization of [gay marriage](#) is hotly debated.

Many conservative [Christians](#), ^[1] [Jews](#), [Muslims](#) and [Sikhs](#) prefer to continue current restrictions against gays, lesbians and bisexuals — including prohibition of [same-sex marriage](#). Some advocate the restoration of [laws](#) which once criminalized same-sex behavior. Many oppose the extension of existing [hate-crime laws](#) to include sexual orientation.

Homosexual believers sometimes persist with their religious belief, either openly or by suppressing that part of themselves, often at great personal cost. ^[2] Homosexuals are twice as likely to [leave their religion](#) for atheism. ^[3]

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Religious discrimination

There are many instances of religiously justified or motivated homophobia, including:

- Disownment by family ^[4]
- Violence and death
- Legal sanctions ^[5] ^[6]
- Biased treatment
- Refusal of goods and services ^[7] ^[8]
- Attempts to "de-convert" people from homosexuality, sometimes by [exorcism](#) or [deliverance ministry](#). ^[2]

This is an example of how [religion causes social harm](#).

Persecuting "sinners"

Sometimes this behaviour is justified by claiming homosexuality is sinful and believers should avoid or disassociate with homosexuals. This is sometimes called [freedom of conscience](#) by theists.

However, this is [cherry picking](#) which groups to discriminate against without any consistency. For example, certain [Christian](#) shop owners refuse to serve gay customers but would serve an adulterer.

They argue that adultery is a "different kind of sin", which is [special pleading](#). ^[9]

An additional problem is that Christians assume "[sin](#)" is a real concept. However, this has not been reliably established.

Avoiding God's wrath











More extremist people, such as Matthew McLaughlin, have called for homosexuals to be killed to avoid God's wrath.

"It is better if offenders ('sodomites') be put to death rather than 'all of us should be killed by God's just wrath against us for tolerating wickedness in our midst.'"



— Matthew McLaughlin ^[10]

Apart from being totally irrational, this implicitly assumes that toleration of another's behaviour is sin, which is an unconventional view.

The Bible on homosexuality

- In [Genesis 2:24](#) , "a man" "is united to his wife"
- In [Genesis 19](#) , God destroys the cities of [Sodom and Gomorrah](#); some say that widespread practice of homosexuality was the main reason. [Ezekiel 16:49](#)  says otherwise.
- [Leviticus 18:22](#) : "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination."
- [Leviticus 20:13](#) : "If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them."
- [Deuteronomy](#) ([Deuteronomy 23:17](#) ) and [1 Kings](#) ([1 Kings 15:12](#) ) state that there shall be no sodomites allowed in [Israel](#).
- [Romans 1:26-27](#) : "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence [sic] of their error which was meet."
- [1 Corinthians 6:9-10](#) : "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, **nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind**, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." (emphasis added)
- [1 Timothy 1:9-10](#) : "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, **for them that defile themselves with mankind**, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine." (emphasis added)

Counter-arguments to the Bible's stance

- Verses leading up [Genesis 2:24](#)  talk of finding a companion for Adam. That he is alone is stated as being unnatural. That a woman is the only suitable partner is only implied.
- [Genesis 19](#), while commonly held to describe the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah for the "sin" of homosexuality, more likely describes their destruction because of wickedness in general rather than just for homosexuality. They wanted to rape the angels, it makes sense that the sin was in fact rape, not consenting homosexuality. [Ezekiel 16:49](#)  (KJV) reads as such:

"Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy."

This supports the view that the sins of Sodom were not homosexuality.

- [Leviticus 18:22](#) 📖 can have more than one interpretation. Some people have suggested what is condemned in this verse is pagan rituals, which involved homosexual acts. This fits in with the context of the verse, as [Leviticus 18:27-28](#) 📖 specifically says that the pagans defiled the land with such acts.
- Although the book of 1 Kings does say that there will be no sodomites in Israel, that's only in the [King James Version](#). Other, more accurate modern translations render the word "male temple prostitute".
- The translation of [1 Corinthians 6:9](#) 📖 as "homosexuals" is contentious. The words translated as "homosexual"(RSV) are "malakoi" meaning soft or effeminate, and "arsenokoitai" whose meaning as debatable but literally translates as "male-bedder". It is possible that Paul in this verse is condemning prostitution. There were temple prostitutes in Corinth at the time who were involved in worshipping other gods.
- There is also **no** indication that homosexuality is somehow a more severe sin than [fornication](#). So *at worst* homosexuals should be treated the same as anyone else who has sex outside of [marriage](#). Have you ever seen an angry mob opposing unmarried couples?

Evolving language and understanding of homosexuality

- The word "homosexual" was not created until the late 19th century. It first appeared in an English Bible in the New International Version, 1973. Before that, "[sodomite](#)" was commonly used, clearly defined as a sexual act and unrelated to the Greek root words of "arsen" meaning "man" and "koitai" meaning "bed" with a sexual connotation. "Arsen" and "koitai" appear separately but near each other in Leviticus. These are Koine Greek translations of Hebrew that appear in the LXX version of the Torah that Paul would have drawn from to create the word "arsenkoitai". Online Greek translators do not recognize the word "arsenkoitai". Its first appearance in writing was in the writings of Paul and has very little use outside of Biblical references.
- In Biblical times, homosexuality as a loving relationship was rarely written about. Men raping men was used to show domination and was used by conquering soldiers. Homosexual sex also used in pagan rituals. In the time of Paul's writings, homosexuality was seen as a more lustful expression, and men having sex with a properly submissive woman seen as a normal expression of lust. (See Romans 1:26 above).
- Thomas Aquinas wrote about homosexuality being unnatural.
- Homosexuality was still seen as abnormal into the 20th century and homosexuals were not allowed to be psychiatrists. In 1957 Evelyn Hooker conducted the first analysis of homosexuality that included men who were not diagnosed with a disorder, that is, men who were functioning normally in society. Her methods have been criticized, but her analysis has been repeated and verified.
- Amid protest by gay activists for the classification of homosexuality as a mental disorder, it was removed from the DSM of the APA. It was ratified by a 58% vote. "Closeted" homosexuals had managed to become psychiatrists, leading to accusations that they "infiltrated" the APA to change the DSM.

Accepting homosexuals, condemning homosexual behavior

Some apologists draw a distinction between having a homosexual orientation, which is presumably determined by God, and homosexual acts, which God allegedly finds an abomination. Even if homosexuality is not a choice, they claim that expressing it *is* a choice. ^[11]

It seems contradictory for God to give people a disposition to "sin" by homosexual acts (or in any other way); God seems to be setting up people to fail. This contradicts the idea of an [omnibenevolent](#) or just God.

If human behaviour is guided by natural laws (which is necessarily true under [naturalism](#)), then it is normal to have a mixture of heterosexual and homosexual people. Christianity seems to have moral prohibitions that are contrary to normal human tendencies.

Christianity



Christians marching in a pride parade.

There is a wide range of views regarding homosexuality in Christianity, ranging for total acceptance, toleration to calls for death. Various groups exist to enable connecting between LGBT people within the religion, such as [two23.net](#) in the UK and [gaychristian.net](#) in the US.

Evangelical

"while the majority of evangelical Christians still do not support marriage equality, the number of Christian voices affirming gay lives has grown from a solo to a chorus: Trey's friend Rob Bell; Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker's son Jay; Presbyterian writer Matthew Vines; Episcopal Bishop John Shelby Spong; even former Pentecostal preacher Carlton Pearson, a protégé of Oral Roberts who married me and my husband" ^[12]

Mormonism

The LDS church opposes homosexual behaviours:

"[Homosexual] attraction itself is not a sin, but acting on it is." ^[13]

Changes to church rules in November 2015 stated that people in same sex marriages should be disciplined. This could lead to their [excommunication](#). ^[14]

"adults who choose to enter into a same-gender marriage or similar relationship commit sin that warrants a Church disciplinary council. ^[15]"

Also, they ruled that children living with same sex parents could not be baptised, saying it was in the best interest of the child. ^[15] This led to a wave of resignations with people disgusted with the church's stance. ^[16]

Baptist

Some preachers celebrated the 2016 mass shooting at a Florida LGBT nightclub, which is a sign of [religious extremism](#). It also falsely equates homosexuality with paedophilia. Of course, not all Christians agree with this stance and often condemn homophobia. ^[17]

"People say, like: Well, aren't you sad that 50 sodomites died? Here's the problem with that. It's like the equivalent of asking me — what if you asked me: Hey, are you sad that 50 pedophiles were killed today? Um, no, I think that's great. I think that helps society. You know, I think Orlando, Fla., is a little safer tonight.^[18]"

Islam

Within [Islam](#), homosexuality is generally considered to be forbidden, immoral or shameful, ^[19] with many Islamic countries punishing it with the death penalty. Some liberal believers and mosques are accepting of homosexuals. ^[20]

Qur'an



For more information, see the [Skeptic's Annotated Quran](#) article:

[Homosexuality in the Quran](#)

- [Surah 7:80-81](#) 📖: "And Lot! (Remember) when he said unto his folk: Will ye commit abomination such as no creature ever did before you? Lo! ye come with lust unto men instead of women. Nay, but ye are wanton folk."
- [Surah 26:165-166](#) 📖: "What! Of all creatures do ye come unto the males, And leave the wives your Lord created for you? Nay, but ye are froward folk."
- [Surah 27:54-55](#) 📖: "And Lot! when he said unto his folk: Will ye commit abomination knowingly?"
- [Surah 29:28-29](#) 📖: "And Lot! (Remember) when he said unto his folk: Lo! ye commit lewdness such as no creature did before you. For come ye not in unto males, and cut ye not the road (for travellers), and commit ye not abomination in your meetings ? But the answer of his folk was only that they said: Bring Allah's doom upon us if thou art a truth-teller!"

Views

Homosexuality is unnatural

Apologists sometimes assert that homosexuality is unnatural or "against nature". This is the position of most Christian denominations and mainstream Islam. Apologist [Kirk Cameron](#) called homosexuality "unnatural, detrimental, and destructive". ^[21]

"For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:"

— [Romans 1:26](#) 📖

While it is more common for arguments to be made from other religious scriptures, religious critics have argued that homosexuality is unnatural because of magnetic attraction ^[22]. Family Research Council President Tony Perkins claimed that normalizing homosexuality could cause the extinction of humans. ^[23]

Even if homosexuality were unnatural or "abnormal", it does not logically follow that it is bad. This is an instance of the [moralistic fallacy](#), an [appeal to nature](#), as well as the [is-ought problem](#). Instead, one would still need to show, why homosexuality itself is bad. And once you shift the argument to the alleged bad effects of homosexuality, the fact whether it is natural or unnatural does not add any additional value and loses its relevance.

The purpose of sex is procreation

Apologists often argue that the [purpose](#) of sex is procreation and therefore should only be used for that purpose. The purpose of sex is allegedly defined as part of "[God's plan](#)".

"The biological purpose of sex is children, just as the biological purpose of eating is to repair the body."

— [C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity](#)

"The deliberate use of the sexual faculty, for whatever reason, outside of marriage is essentially contrary to its purpose. ^[24]"

How apologists reliably know this is not stated. This also [equivocates](#) between "purpose" generally and "biological purpose", as if biology is the only context of purpose. He assumes that God's purpose should always be obeyed, [which suffers from the is-ought problem](#). Additionally, he overlooks the biological mechanism of sexual pleasure, which also requires appropriate biological systems such as senses and a nervous system to experience it, and therefore also has a biological purpose.

Homosexuality is a choice


Some Christians maintain that people have a choice as to being homosexual or heterosexual. Choice is a dogmatic necessity because many apologists regard homosexuality as sinful, which necessarily implies it is a choice.

"You can deny it all you want to but I believe in the word of God. And God creates nobody in that way. It's a path that you have chosen. ^[4]"

82% of American Protestant ministers agree with "homosexuality is a choice people make". ^[25]

Counter-arguments

- The discovery of homosexuality in many thousands of other species including goats and penguins, and even our closest relatives the bonobos and chimpanzees, has shown that homosexuality most likely isn't a choice, but rather something a person is born with. ^{[26][27][28]} Homosexuality existing in many animal species suggesting it has some evolutionary origin (or at least it is not detrimental to species survival). The threat of extinction from homosexuality is exaggerated with only a small minority having such tendencies.
- Researchers have also found evidence that hormones present in the womb effect the development of a fetus and may play a role in development of homosexuality. ^[29]
- An easy counter to the idea of sexuality being a choice is telling people (usually heterosexual ones) to choose to become gay for a few days, or at the very least "shut down their straight urges", since it's supposedly possible.
- The idea that "Normalizing homosexuality will cause the extinction of humans" assumes baselessly that the entire human race will one day be composed of only homosexuals. Also, if the only reason people should exist is to bear more children (Disregarding the many orphaned children no one cares for), then something should also be done about infertile people of any sexuality.
- "It has been known that homosexuality can run in families. If one of a set of identical twins is gay, there's a 20% chance that the other will be, too." ^[30]

- In addition to relating to biological naturalness, the claim that homosexuality is unnatural (or "abnormal") may also be used to denote a deviation in behavior from the majority, or the norms of a society. To counter this argument, one just needs to slightly change the scope: it is natural *for a society* to include a certain amount of people who are homosexual, just as it natural for there to be a certain amount of people who are left-handed (Coincidentally, Left-Handed people were demonized in the Dark Ages).
- If God (also taking in account [Which god?](#)) or [absolute morality](#) exists, we cannot reliably know his intentions. We therefore cannot use this as a basis for homosexuality's alleged unnaturalness.
- Those claiming that "God doesn't create people flawed" forget: 1 - people born with physical handicaps and mental illnesses. 2 - (regarding the Abrahamic god) how the dogma states that everyone's born flawed because of [the Fall](#) and needs salvation.
- Arguments from magnetism is an [argument from analogy](#). However, it is still needs to be shown if the analogy is valid.
- [Romans 1:26-27](#)  describes clearly how God **himself** made people homosexual. This passage could also be a reference to idol worship and prostitution, due to the context of the preceding passages.
- A study of sexual activities performed by gay men found that anal sex was actually rare (34-36%). ^[31] Almost half of straight women have tried anal sex. ^[32] This statistics demolish common stereotypes of behavior.

Teaching homosexuality is wrong is child abuse

Because sexual orientation is part of our identity and generally unchanging, it is [harmful to tell children](#) that their identity is somehow disordered.

"It's child abuse to tell gay children that what they think and feel is wrong ^[33]"

External links

- [Born gay debate at ProCon.org](#)

- [The Not All Like That \(NALT\) Christians project made up of homosexuality-accepting churches](#)
- [Homosexuality articles](#) at [Religious Tolerance](#)
- [Soulforce](#)
- [Whosoever, gay Christian group](#)
- [Nurse destroys archbishop's gay marriage stance with a stroke of her pen](#)
- [Over 100 Clergy Come Out As LGBT](#) in the United [Methodist](#) Church
- [Naz and Matt Foundation](#), tackling homophobia triggered by religion to help parents accept their children

See Also

- [Gay marriage](#)
- [Reparative therapy](#)

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Right to die



For more information, see the [Wikipedia](#) article:

[Right to die](#)

The **right to die** is an entitlement to end one's life by [suicide](#), assisted dying or [voluntary euthanasia](#). This is often motivated by the desire to avoid needless suffering in cases involving serious illness. Most countries have prohibited such actions including assistance of suicide. Religious leaders have traditionally opposed to the right, considering it contrary to God's purposes, a threat to vulnerable individuals and a violation of the sanctity of life.

The right to die is considered by some ethicists to be a [natural right](#). Others support the broad principle but do not go as far as to say it is an [absolute right](#).

People generally accept that non-human animals can be "put to sleep" if they suffer extreme injury or sickness. However, we arbitrarily refuse to apply the same standard to the human animal.

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Religious views

There is renewed interest in legalisation of voluntary euthanasia in the UK, with some former [Anglican](#) leaders supporting the campaign. ^[1] ^[2] The current Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby says it is "mistaken and dangerous". In July 2014, the Church of England announced it is opening an inquiry into the right to die. ^[3]

In a 2015 joint letter, many religious leaders in the UK expressed their opposition to the right to die on the grounds that it could put people could feel like they are a burden on family and friends or be put under pressure to agree to their own death. However, wanting to not be a burden on family and friends is arguably a legitimate reason for wanting to die.

"[Allowing assisted dying] has the potential to have a significant impact on other vulnerable individuals: those who believe that they have become burdens to family and carers and feel under pressure within themselves to “do the decent thing” and, tragically, those who might be pressured by others to seek a medically assisted death.[...] A law based on this assisted dying bill would put at risk many more vulnerable people than it seeks to help. ^[4]"

The [Catholic](#) Church opposes the right to die but considers medical interventions that prolong life but are excessively burdensome to be optional. ^[5] The [Islamic](#) view is broadly similar:

"When death becomes inevitable, as determined by physicians taking care of terminally ill patients, the patient should be allowed to die without unnecessary procedures."^[6]

Public support

United States

"70% of Americans [are] in favor of allowing doctors to hasten a terminally ill patient's death when the matter is described as allowing doctors to "end the patient's life by some painless means." ^[7]

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3. [↑ Assisted dying: Church of England seeks inquiry](#), BBC, 12th July 2014
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7. [↑ \[4\]](#)

Omnipotence paradox

The [omnipotence](#) paradox is generally summed up by the phrase or some form of the phrase "[Can God create a rock so heavy that he can't lift it?](#)". Either God can or can't create the rock. If he can create a rock so big he can't lift it then he's not omnipotent because he can't lift it. If he can't create a rock that big in the first place then he's still not omnipotent.

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Accidental vs. Essential Omnipotence

The omnipotence paradox may be resolved by stating that God is either accidentally or essentially omnipotent.

Accidental Omnipotence

An accidentally omnipotent God could resolve the paradox by creating a rock so heavy that he can't lift it and thus, ceases to be omnipotent. In other words, because this God is "omnipotent", this God can make himself "not omnipotent" anymore. However, one could argue that it's hard to tell if a god of this sort was ever truly omnipotent or just in possession of great power. One way to reconcile this is to suggest that the God is really omnipotent. But just as many of us will not want to drive a knife through our eyes, God too may not choose to make himself not omnipotent anymore, although he has the ability to do so. Again, the point that God is not truly omnipotent can be raised. This point, however, commits the No true Scotsman fallacy. Put simply, an accidentally omnipotent God IS omnipotent and can thus make himself not omnipotent anymore.

Essential Omnipotence

Essential omnipotence states that it is impossible for the god to be non-omnipotent. Some theists may argue that God is not "absolutely omnipotent" but is merely "omnipotent". This is an extremely

dishonest use of words, for omnipotence is suppose to be the highest possible attainable state of power in which the being can acheive anything, and adding the term "absolutely" means nothing. One can say that God is "absolutely absolutely absolutely omnipotent", which gives a similar empty effect. Nonetheless, according to Peter Geach, if Y is absolutely omnipotent, then Y "can do everything absolutely. Everything that can be expressed in a string of words even if it can be shown to be self-contradictory," Y "is not bound in action, as we are in thought by the laws of logic." (See Wikipedia: Omnipotence Paradox) On the other hand, being merely "omnipotent" means that Y will be subjected to the laws of logic. "Absolute omnipotence" will put Y in a precarious position of falling straight into the omnipotence paradox. Mere "omnipotence", however, shows that Y is unable to acheive everything anymore, as there is something that Y cannot do, which is to defy the laws of logic which it has supposedly created formerly. The term "omnipotence" used to described Y will thus be very misleading.

Moral Limitations

Even if we grant that God can do all things **except** those which are "logically impossible", there still seem to be limits on God's abilities in practice, though not prohibited by logic. Can God act in a way that is [evil](#)? By definition, God is supposed to be [omnibenevolent](#), so the answer should be no. Yet people can do many things that are evil, so clearly being evil is logically possible, but God supposedly cannot do it. People *can* commit imperfect acts, so it is logically possible. However, God, a perfect being, *cannot* do so, therefore he is *not* omnipotent. The "ability" to do imperfect things goes against what we define as perfect. But isn't God who defines perfection? If it is so, then the statement "god is perfect" is meaningless. As an inductive case, we can say that perfection does not exist (god created imperfection apparently), therefore God does not exist. There is always room for improvement, except in the case of a perfect being. However imperfection gives us willpower to act and improve, which God cannot possess. If God's activity is asserted, then perfection must be eliminated.

God's Free Will

Apologists may respond to the above argument by stating that it isn't that God *can't* do evil, it's just that he always uses his perfect free-will to choose not to. This, of course, raises the question of why God didn't create humans the same way. It would be a good solution to the [problem of evil](#).

God's Nature?

Another answer to the above argument is the assertion that being good is "God's nature," and He can only do things that aren't against His own nature. At this point, the concept of omnipotence starts to get completely fuzzy. "God's nature" appears to be defined as "the things that God is capable of doing." In this case, the claim of omnipotence is nothing more than the tautological statement, "God can do all things that God can do." Under this usage, people are also "omniscient."

The fundamental problem may be that the concept of being **all**-powerful is ill-defined and lends itself to [equivocation](#).

Standard of Morality

A third answer to the above: Because God is the defining standard of morality, anything that God does is good, regardless of how horrendous the same action would be if it were conducted by a human. This neatly resolves the omnibenevolence issue, but does not address omnipotence.

Omnipotence vs omniscience

An omnipotent god is further confused when it is also granted omniscience, that is knowledge of all things past, present and future. If a god knows what is going to happen in the future, it is not able to omnipotently change that future because it is limited to what it knows will happen. If a god can omnipotently change that future then that god can not have known the future in the first place and is therefore not omniscient.

For example, the omnipotent and omniscient God at Time X speculates that Scenario A will occur 10 minutes later. 5 minutes later, one then wonders whether this God can cause Scenario B, instead of A, to occur after another 5 minutes. If he can, then he is no longer omniscient; if he cannot, then he is no longer omnipotent.

One must note that omnipotence can easily lead to omniscience. An omnipotent god has the ability to do anything with the unlimited power of his, that is, he can gain the knowledge of all things past, present and future. As such, this may be considered as another form of the omnipotence paradox. One can then ask the question, "Can an omnipotent God make himself omniscient?" If yes, then there exists a contradiction, as mentioned above. If no, then there is something that God apparently cannot do, which is to make himself omniscient, and he thus ceases to be omnipotent.

Swinburne's definition

[Richard Swinburne](#) invented the following definition of omnipotence in an attempt to define this paradox out of existence:

"A person P is omnipotent at a time t if and only if he is able to bring about any logically contingent state of affairs x after t , the descriptions of which does not entail that P did not bring x about at t . This is subject to the restriction that a person is no less omnipotent for being unable to bring about a state of affairs if he believes that he has overriding reason not to bring it about. So, God is omnipotent even if he is unable to do what he believes wrong.

The paradox of the stone has false premises."

Countering Swinburne

Swinburne's argument depends on linear time, or at least the ability to describe events in a linear fashion. Furthermore, the concept of a "Logically contingent state of affairs" presumes that person P is subject to the laws of logic - as the alleged creator of the universe that contains

these laws, one would presume that God also created these laws and retains the ability to alter them.

The premise of the stone-paradox is not whether god chooses to do only what he considers right. The paradox arises when determining whether god is CAPABLE of performance. Performance is inconsistent with the logic of this universe. God could not simultaneously maintain the laws of this universe AND break the paradox.

Expanding this argument, we can further state that God cannot create even a single atomic particle without violating the logic of this universe, and thus demonstrating a flaw in his alleged omnipotence.

Categories:

- [Arguments](#)
- [Arguments against the existence of God](#)
- [Deductive arguments](#)

http://wiki.ironchariots.org/index.php?title=Omnipotence_paradox